

A
COLLECTION
OF
DISCOURSES,

On the various Duties of Religion,

AS TAUGHT BY THE
CATHOLIC CHURCH;

COMPRIZING
All the SUNDAYS AND FESTIVALS of the YEAR,
IN THREE VOLUMES.

JAMES.
By the REV. MR. APPLETON, C. A. D.

V O L. II.

Blessed are they, that hear the Word of God, and keep it.
LUKE ii, 28.

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M D C C L X X X V I.

COLLECTION

DISCOURSES

ON THE VARIOUS TOPICS OF RELIGION

AS TAUGHT BY THE

CATHOLIC CHURCH



ALL THE SUNDAYS THROUGHOUT THE YEAR

IN THREE VOLUMES

By the Rev. Mr. APPERTON, C. A. D.

VOLUME II

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position is born with man, that it grows up and dies but with him. To engrave the impression more deeply, Christ has commands us to be **THE** merciful; as if he had said, compassionate by nature, let the dictates of religion also support you

FIRST SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

prompts you to commiserate your fellow creatures, with how much more reason are you bound to love them as Christians? Baptism has made you my children, and at that instant mercy was born in you; cultivate it therefore, and bring it to maturity: for it is mercy I call for, and not

On the Love of our Neighbour.

BE YE MERCIFUL, AS YOUR FATHER ALSO IS MERCIFUL.

Luke, vi. 36.

THE drift of this present Gospel, Christians, is to instil into us a spirit of charity, and to inspire us with the sentiments of an unbounded benevolence. Happy should I be, could I promote it's design, as henceforth to see you animated with one common soul.

Be merciful, says Christ. Alas! my friends, what is there disagreeable or repugnant in this

commandment? Compassion towards our neighbour is a thing so natural to us, that Job is not ~~afraid of exaggerating, when he says that this~~ disposition is born with man, that it grows up and dies but with him. To engrave the impression more deeply, Christ ~~here~~ commands us to *be merciful*; as if he had said, compassionate by nature, let the dictates of religion also support you in that ~~inbred~~ principle; if, as men, inclination prompts you to commiserate your fellow creatures, with how much more reason are you bound to love them as Christians? Baptism has made you my children, and at that instant mercy was born in you; cultivate it therefore, and bring it to maturity; for it is *mercy I call for, and not sacrifice*.

Nor does our Saviour content himself with telling us what we ought to do; he moreover proposes to us the model we should imitate. *Be merciful as your Father is merciful*. Is not this plainly to insinuate that God will not be our Father, unless we shew mercy to our brethren? since we cannot be his children, without bearing some resemblance to him.

Wherefore, as mercy, or the love of our neighbour, is so essential to the christian character, I will here, in the first place, unfold the pressing motives,

motives, that engage us to love our neighbour; and in the second, the rules, we ought to follow, to love him properly: imploring the aid of the supreme wisdom, for this purpose.

The principal motives, dear people, that should induce us to love our neighbour, are the following. We have all one and the same Father; one and the same Mother, and are all members of one common head. He is a child of the same Father, as ourselves, viz. of Jesus Christ. He is a child of the same Mother, viz. of the Church: He is a member of the same head and body, viz. of Jesus Christ and the Church united.

When the Deity created man, he did not design, St. Augustin says, that he should live alone, and secluded from society. He not only formed a companion for him in his solitude, but, presently after, the human race was multiplied. And what were the views of God therein, continues this holy Doctor; but that men, being similar by nature, should have the like affections and desires? But alas! sin, in a short time, made a division between God and man; and this first division was the source, from which a variety of others, almost as fatal, took their rise.

It is our duty to consider all Christians as our equals and as our brethren; knowing that we all

spring from one common stock. Such was the intention of the Son of God, in calling us to his faith, to establish in our hearts the reign of charity and mutual love. He has made us all equal; by directing us all to say alike, *Our Father, who art in Heaven*. This equality then, which our Redeemer was desirous to introduce among us, is founded on the union, we ought to have among ourselves, as children of the same parent. We are all equal therefore, and duty calls upon us to love one another as brethren.

Yes, Christians, we are all brethren, children of the same Father, formed on the cross in the adorable blood of Jesus Christ; and this fraternity is infinitely more binding than the ties of flesh and blood. Is it possible we can refuse to regard our neighbour with an affectionate benevolence, when we think of this?

Recollect, my friends, those awful moments, when our Redeemer, about to deliver himself up for our sins, inculcated the commandment of loving one another as the most important, the most affecting clause of his last will. My *children*, he says to the Apostles, and in them, to all his followers, *love one another : by this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another*. John xiii, 35. *Holy Father !* he exclaims,
keep

keep them in thy name, whom thou hast given me; that they may be one, as we also are; John xvii, 11. for by this shall the world believe that thou hast sent me. Ib. 21. The plan of our divine Saviour, therefore, his intention in engaging the world to believe in him was that we might all be united, all conjoined, all one. *That they may be one, as we also are.*

- If you loved Christ, says the Apostle, you would have the like sentiments as Christ: Now what are these, but the feelings of a most sincere affection for all his children? And what are yours, my friends? Acknowledge it to your confusion; the gnawings of envy and animosity, of jealousy and hatred towards these same children, your own brethren. But remember the doctrine of St. John; *if any man says, I love God and hateth his brother, he is a liar.* 1 John, iv, 20. For had you that regard for God which you profess, would you not love whatsoever he loves? since whatever he sets a value on becomes in some measure a part of himself.

Let us therefore love one another cordially, and make that our study on earth, which we hope will be our eternal employment in heaven. There we shall love perfectly, and be all united as the living stones of the same fabric; that mystical temple of charity, in which the Lord shall be for ever honoured.

noured. There we shall know and see each other without disguise, without suspicion; because we shall then be animated with the same spirit. How then, can you hate those, with whom you hope to live for all eternity? Why do you not begin at present what you wish to continue for endless ages?

But this is not all, my brethren. If we are children of the same Father, we are no less the offspring of the same Mother. Baptism is the womb of the Church, in which the faithful are conceived: this the sacrament, by means of which that fruitful mother bears them all to Jesus Christ. Now as, in the order of nature, a child in it's mother's womb has the same motion, the same life, in some measure, as it's parent; so all Christians, that are in the womb of one common mother, the Church, should have the same sentiments, the same inclinations, the same principle of life so to speak, as she has.

What a pleasing sight, in the early ages of Christianity, to view the harmony, that reigned among the primitive faithful? *The multitude of the believers*, say the sacred oracles, *had but one heart and one soul*: Acts iv, 32. because they all regarded themselves as enclosed in the womb of the same mother, where they had lately been produced.

And

And as there was but one interest, so neither was there more than one mind among them. Yes, said the Pagans, speaking of them; they are kind, they are benevolent, they are charitable; for their creed, their morality, their gospel enjoin them to love their neighbours and to do good to every one. And from seeing their concord, their beneficence, their affability, the heathens were readily induced to declare openly in favour of a religion, that professed such amiable virtues. And in fact, how wonderful must it have been to behold so complete an union among persons, who, for the most part, had not the slightest acquaintance; people of different nations, and different climates; whom neither languages nor customs could disunite. And this mutual charity, which the divine grace had formed, subsisted so long, that even in the age, in which St. Ambrose lived, it was still the subject of universal admiration. But if to shew you that you are children of the same parents be not enough to engage you to love your neighbour; know, my friends, that a still closer tie unites you to him; since you are members of the same head, which is Christ, and of the same body, which is the Church.

You are sufficiently instructed not to be ignorant that we all together constitute one body,

of which Jesus Christ is the head, and ourselves are the members. *He, says St. Paul, is the head of the body, which is the Church; Col. i, 18. and in another place he adds, as in one body we have many members, but all the members have not the same office; so we being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members of one another. Rom. xii, 4. Let there be no schism* then he concludes, *no division in the body.* You all collectively form the body of Christ, of which each one individually is a member. According to the inference therefore, which the Apostle draws from these premises, you are obligated, Christians, to give your fellow creatures every assistance they may reasonably demand of you; to be glad with them that rejoice, to condole with them that are in tears, to relieve their wants, to redress their grievances if in your power, although even the so doing may, possibly chance to expose you to an inconvenience. But how many of you act quite a different part; who, instead of consoling your neighbour in his afflictions, whether spiritual or temporal, and commiserating his misfortunes, are glad of them; and no less sorry, than envious at his prosperity? What would you say, were you to see the members of an acquaintance at war with one another? the hands tearing the face, the teeth gnawing the arms, &c. Would not you deem

deem the person, that was come to such a pass, a madman and fit for bedlam only? What can I think of you therefore, when I behold you pulling one another to pieces, and attempting every mischief within your reach? May I not with justice style you frantic; since you endeavour to destroy the members of the same body as yourselves, the head of which is Jesus Christ.

Let us then love our neighbour, Christians; since, having one and the same Father, we are all brothers, and aspire to the same inheritance; let us love him, since, having the same mother, we are all carried in the same bowels: but above all, let us love him, because we are members of the same body as himself. Let it be our study to procure him every good, and to screen him from every evil as far as possible.

With obligations therefore, that should unite you so closely to your fellow creatures, I have too good an opinion of you, brethren, not to be convinced that you are determined to adopt the sentiments of an unlimited benevolence. But as you may be mistaken in your ideas of the manner, in which this duty is to be complied with, I will in the next place discover to you how it is to be accomplished. First, we must love our neighbour, as we should be glad to be loved by him: secondly,

we

we must love him, as we love ourselves; and thirdly, we must love him, as Christ has loved us.

We must love our neighbour, I say, as we would be loved by him, and behave to him in the same manner, as we would be willing he should behave to us. An admirable and altogether divine rule; which appeared so equitable to a certain Heathen Prince, that he deemed it a convincing proof of the veracity of the religion, that dictated it. Observe this rule, Christians, and there will be no cause for complaint. Consult but your hearts and the motions, they suggest in regard to yourselves. In our dealings with our neighbour, let us often ask ourselves: should I like to be used in this manner? to be treated with scorn, to be spoke to with contempt, to be addressed in a harsh or imperious tone, to be traduced, to be made a subject of ridicule, to have my slightest failings exaggerated, my best intentions wilfully misconstrued, my conduct censured on the most trivial grounds? In short, am I not desirous that others should be indulgent in regard to me? Why then do I not observe this comportment towards them?

Comprehend this principle thoroughly, my friends; a principle, which nature had impressed upon you, long before you were acquainted with religion; and learn from it that our benevolence
must

must be universal, and that no one is to be excluded from our affection, be he what he may. As we desire to be loved by all, and the enmity of one single person is sufficient to unhinge us; so it is equally just that we should love the whole world in our turn. Because the hatred of any individual, (notwithstanding we might harbour the most charitable dispositions in regard to every one besides) would effectually destroy charity. The reason of which is obvious; the motive of charity being general, it includes all mankind; as the motive of faith extends equally to every article of our belief: and as to lose our faith, it suffices to doubt wilfully of any one tenet of religion; so likewise to banish charity, it is sufficient to exclude one single person from our heart. True charity embraces all without distinction; and has as many brothers as there are men on earth; it makes no reserve of any kind whatever; because it considers every one as enclosed in the heart of Jesus Christ. Enlarge your ideas then, ye narrow-minded Christians! You are born for the whole world, and yet you scarcely count a friend in the place, where you reside.

Secondly, *thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.* Matt. xxii, 39. On which passage, St. Thomas remarks that the word *as thyself* does not imply an equality, but a resemblance of love; so
that

that the affection, we have for ourselves, should be the pattern of that, which is due to our fellow-creatures. Now, in what does this resemblance consist? First, that the love of our neighbour must be similar to that, we entertain for ourselves, *as to it's end*; i. e. as we ought to love ourselves for God's sake, our charity for our brethren must have the same end, in order to be *holy*. Secondly, it must be similar *as to it's rule*; i. e. as we should never follow the bent of our own will, but for the performance of what is right; so neither must we ever condescend, through a mistaken complaisance, to any evil, that our neighbour may solicit of us; because our affection, to be *just*, can have no other rule but his welfare. Thirdly, it must be similar *as to it's motive*; i. e. our love for our neighbour must be *sincere*; it must be founded neither on interest nor pleasure; but solely on that real good, which we ought to wish and procure for him, with the like attention and alacrity as we would for ourselves.

Now, examine your dispositions in this respect, my brethren. Do you never do that to your neighbour, which, according to the dictates of prudence, you would be unwilling he should do to you? and do you always act by him, as in reason and religion, you would wish him to act in
your

your regard? But see first if you understand rightly how to love yourselves; then I will recommend your neighbour to you, and exhort you to love him in a like manner. It is a mistake, says St. Prosper, to pretend a good will for our neighbour, unless we be animated with a pious zeal for his salvation; for such is the affection we are bound to have for ourselves. The love we owe to ourselves then, I say *that holy*, that *just*, that *sincere* love, which St. Thomas here treats of, is the model of the kindness, we should entertain for our fellow-creatures. *Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself*. Does not this single sentence suffice to do away every prejudice? and whilst it regulates our duty, does it not impeach our conduct?

Tell me, Christians, was there ever a time, in which this benevolence towards our neighbour was less sincere, than it is at present? Is not interest the only bond, in a general way, that now-a-days unites us? Nay, in regard even to our relations and nearest connections is not this the cement of our affection? But shall we give the name of charity to such venal dispositions as these? No; the charity, that God requires, disowns such groveling sentiments; it opens our heart in relation to our brethren; and as the love we bear
to

to ourselves, diminishes our faults in our own eyes, aggravates our misfortunes, and always adheres to us; so does charity cover the multitude of our neighbour's defects, it is alive to his misery, and never forsakes him, no, not even in the grave.

Shall I here be obligated to remind you, Christians, of what our divine Saviour did and suffered to prove his love for us? What humiliations did he not stoop to? What labours did he not undergo? What torments did he not endure, to free us from the slavery of Satan, under which we had so long groaned? Are not such exalted testimonies of his charity sufficient to induce you to regard your fellow creatures with the eye of benevolence, to render them every service in your power, and not to be disgusted at their failings? And was not the beloved disciple, who so well understood the discipline of charity, in the right to draw this inference, that if *God hath so loved us, we ought to love one another?* i. John, 4, 11. Think of what the Son of God has vouchsafed to do for others as well as for yourselves, and you will find no difficulty in assisting them under their necessities; your only desire then will be to give them, by your good offices, unequivocal proofs of the most affectionate and tender charity.

For

For take notice; to love our neighbour, as we ought, we must love him, as Christ loved us. *This is my commandment, he says, that you love one another as I have loved you.* John xv, 12. This is *my new commandment, MY commandment*, my excellence, as it were. What a model! what an extent! how did Christ love us? With plentitude, with superabundance, to an excess. *In this we have known the love of God, because he hath laid down his life for us,* 1 John, iii, 16; and under what circumstances? at the time we were his enemies, *when we were as yet sinners, Christ died for us.* Rom. v, 8. By this charity, *he hath delivered us from the wrath to come.* 1. Theff. i. 10. By the same, *he hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings.* Ephes. i. 3. This therefore, brethren, should be the model of your affection for your companions; *wherefore receive one another,* St. Paul concludes, *as Christ hath received you, to the honour of God.* Rom. xv. 7. But do you love your neighbour in this manner? how shall you be willing to give your life for him, when you refuse him what he wants for mere subsistence? What zeal have you testified for his salvation? to open his eyes to the light of truth? to point out to him the tract of happiness? By what motive principally have you been actuated in
your

your conduct towards him? by the desire of extending the glory of God, or by the wish of promoting your own interests?

How great should be our confusion, adorable Saviour! at the sight of the small resemblance we bear to thee? Do we not every day behold the accomplishment of thy prophecy? *men shall betray one another and shall hate one another; Mat. xxiv, 10. and because iniquity hath abounded, the charity of many shall grow cold. ib. 12.* Is not this prediction verified among ourselves, my friends? What do we every where see and hear, but some aspersing their neighbour by the most apparent obloquy; others lessening him by ways no less effectual, though not so bare faced; these busied in watching and undermining him; those intent on transmitting their unjust aversions to posterity; all, or the greatest part, at variance, striving to supplant one another, and betraying an utter insensibility to their neighbour's calamities? Oh! dear brethren, cast your eyes on Jesus Christ our sacred model. Consider his charity for his Apostles, for his people, for all mankind, for you and for me. Imitate, by his grace, the noble pattern, he has set before you; and form yourselves on this divine original.

Come

Come, holy spirit ! fill the hearts of my hearers,
and kindle in them the ardent flames of thy love.
O God of charity ! give us a heart, that may
embrace each individual with the most unreserved
affection ; give us a charity, that may make but
one mind of them, that have but one faith ; and
a zealous benevolence, that may extend our good
will to those of every different persuasion : that,
having loved our fellow-servants as we desire to
be loved by them, as we love ourselves, and as
our divine master has loved us all, we may here-
after be united in one common bond of charity in
heaven. Amen.

T H E

SECOND SUNDAY after PENTECOST.

On the Happiness of a Good Communion.

A CERTAIN MAN MADE A GREAT SUPPER AND
INVITED MANY.

Luke, xiv, 16.

THIS parable, which our divine Saviour addresses to the Pharisees, admits of various interpretations. There are those, that refer it to the grand mystery of the incarnation of the word, whom God was pleased to constitute the Redeemer of mankind: and there are others, who, by this great supper, understand that ineffable glory, that eternal beatitude, which Jesus Christ came
to

to merit for us by the effusion of his blood. But how wide soever the range of interpretation may be, I have judged proper for your instruction, Christians, to confine myself to the opinion the most generally adopted by the Fathers; the greatest part of whom explain this parable of the Holy Eucharist; and such, in fact, seems to be the intention of the Church; as she presents us with it at the very time, in which she is fully occupied in recalling to our remembrance the unutterable mystery of this august sacrament.

Viewing it therefore in this light, the first thing, that attracts our admiration, is the excellence of the banquet, to which we are invited; an excellence, that cannot fail to strike us, whether we consider it with relation to the inviter, or to the happiness held out. For who is it that here gives the invitation? No other than the Sovereign Being: a God incarnate: the Son of God; frequently in the scriptures termed the Son of Man, on account of his excessive love to the human race. And what is it he invites us to? to every-thing a God can give; even to the possession of himself, and that for endless ages. Admirable as this may appear; the second thing, which reflection suggests, is no less wonderful: I mean the backwardness of them, that were invited to this solemn feast, and

the truly pitiful excuses, they resort to, to justify themselves in refusing the invitation. *I have bought a farm*, says the first, *I pray thee hold me excused*. This pretence St. Augustin calls the apology of pride; where, whilst humility appears in the words, the manner betrays the disdainful sentiments of the heart. A second says; *I have bought five yoke of Oxen, and I must go and try them*. Here brethren, is the plea of avarice. Alas! how many do we find in our own days of this same unhappy turn, who prefer the advantages of their temporal welfare to the duties of religion? But culpable as these are, there remains a third class, still more criminal; a class, prefigured in the person, who for his excuse alleges *he had married a wife, and therefore could not come*: those I mean, who abandon themselves to sensuality and lawless pleasure.

For our part, dear people, far from imitating the unthankfulness of those depicted in this parable, let us endeavour to avail ourselves of the great advantages, Jesus Christ presents us with, in his divine banquet. From it's excellence, let us learn the happiness of a good communion; and from the conduct of these unfortunate people, the dispositions requisite to communicate worthily. These are the two points, that I design, shall make the subject of the present discourse; but let me first

first entreat you, brethren, to unite your prayers with mine, to draw down the blessing of God on our endeavours.

To make you sensible, my friends, of the happiness of a good communion, two considerations, each of them obvious and simple, may suffice. First, he, who receives worthily, possesses Jesus Christ in his heart. Secondly, Jesus Christ comes to him, to enrich him with his choicest favours.

First, I say, the worthy communicant possesses Christ in his heart. Hear, brethren, what this adorable Saviour himself says; *He, that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, abideth in me, and I in him.* John vi, 57. To conceive the magnitude of the gift therefore, learn to comprehend the greatness of the donor, and to know who Christ is. This St. Paul informs us of, in his epistle to the Hebrews; where, speaking of the person of the Son of God, he tells us that he participates fully of the *glory and substance of his Father*: that he *upholds all things by the power of his word*: that he *cleanses us from our sins*: that *he sits on the right hand of the Majesty on high.* Heb. i, 3. Behold then, Christians, with whose presence you are honoured, when so happy as to partake worthily of his holy table. You no longer speak and act for yourselves: it is Jesus Christ who speaks and acts for

for you. What a motive of confidence ! What a subject of humble thanksgiving is the inestimable gift, he confers upon us in communion !

But let us not stop here, my friends. To say that we possess our heavenly Saviour, although at the instant only of receiving him, is to say a great deal. However, the excess of his tenderness carries him far beyond this. He tells us that he will *abide in us*, and that we shall *abide in him* ; to give us to understand what we are to expect from him. Divine Saviour ! accomplish thy promise ; descend from thy altar, and take possession of those hearts, which expect, which call thee, and which thy grace has previously disposed, and prepared for thy reception. Yes, says this God, jealous of his conquest, *we will come to him and will make our abode with him*. John xiv, 23. Whatever may have been hitherto the condition of this soul, at least, it's present state is such as I desire ; it is mine, *it abideth in me and I in it*. The world had robbed me of it ; but since I have recovered, I will preserve it for the future. Take courage then, repenting sinner ; *confide in me, I have overcome the world*. John xvi, 33. You have dishonoured me, it is true ; but henceforward you shall add to my glory and to my triumph.

For

For observe, dear Christians, that the view of our divine Saviour, in giving himself to us in the Eucharist, is not barely to visit us ; but to unite us to himself, and this by the most intimate connexion possible. The truth of which the very term, we use to express the action, by which we partake of the body and blood of Christ, clearly indicates. For the appellation, by which it is generally distinguished, is that of *communion*, that is to say, a common and mutual union between the person of the Son of God, and the soul, which is so happy as to receive him. He gives himself entirely to us ; and we, on our part, should give ourselves wholly to him. In this adorable sacrament, he communicates to us his spirit, his life, his dispositions : we ought therefore to receive his spirit in it : nor should we any longer act, but by his influence ; nor live, but according to his life. As the nourishment, here presented to us, is wholly divine, so should we become altogether divine likewise,

Be not deluded, said formerly the beloved disciple ; he, who is ambitious to satisfy his conscience with the pleasing assurance of abiding in Christ, must keep the road traced out to him by his Redeemer. *He, that saith he abideth in him, ought himself also to walk, even as he walked,* 1 John ii, 6. Have you, my friends, been made partak-

ers of the bread of life? then Christ has transformed you into himself; live therefore like Christ; *walk even as he walked*: The model is perfect; do your best to copy it. When the food of salvation was offered to you, you promised to live no longer by your own life; that is, by the life of the world, of the senses, of the children of Adam. Accomplish what you are so solemnly engaged to, and *render your vows to the most High*. Live by Christ, as Christ lived by his Father. *As I, he says, live by the Father, so he that eateth me, the same also shall live by me.* John vi, 58. As if he had said, observe it diligently, Christians; know your dignity, and be sensible of my love for you: take notice that I expect of you, who are now my members, what the Father expected of me. I have been, in every regard, his living image; and in like manner I require of you to be, in all respects, the living images and faithful representatives of me.

Such should be the sentiments of a Christian, who is blest with the possession of his God; in whom Christ lives, and who lives in Christ. What may he not promise himself from his divine presence? Fed with the sacred flesh of his Saviour, he bears in his own person the glorious pledge of his future immortality. For according to the general doctrine of the holy Fathers, the Eucharist is
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the gage, as we may say, of that happy eternity, which is promised to us; and it is in this sense, dear brethren, that we are to understand those words of Christ, *He, that eateth this bread shall live for ever*. Your fathers, he says, were nourished with manna, and yet they are dead: but this will not be the case with the food that I shall give you, which is my own flesh; he, that shall partake of this, shall live eternally. Whence it is but just to conclude that a good communion is one of the surest means to obtain everlasting happiness.

But let us look still further, Christians, and behold the treasures, that our Jesus opens to us in the blessed Eucharist. To convince you of which, I shall be content to remark, in a few words, the disparity between the other sacraments and this adorable mystery of our altars. All the former have a particular effect; each of them producing that, which is peculiar to itself; whereas, the latter is an inexhaustible fund of almost unlimited graces. Thus the special effect of baptism is to do away that original stain, with which we are born: of confirmation, to strengthen us in our faith: of penance, to efface our actual sins. But the sacrament of the body and blood of Christ, like the manna, which flattered each palate, and agreed with every constitution, without being appropriated
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to any virtue in particular, is a rich mine, where we may dig without ceasing, and which will amply supply every want, that we may have. In this celestial food, the primitive faithful found a firm support, under the most bitter persecutions : to this sanctuary they fled, and thence came forth, as St Chrysostom tells us, animated with an ardour from above, which imboldened them to face death in all it's horrors ; for like lions breathing out flames, he says, their noble hearts dilated and acquired vigour, in proportion to the increase of the dangers, they were threatened with. This heavenly nourishment was the safe-guard of so many tender virgins, under the severest trials ; who, fortified with this bread of angels, were every where seen to resist the most pressing solicitations ; and contemning the allurements of flattery and pleasure, to superadd the glory of martyrdom to the unspotted honour of virginity. This same divine food was the comfort of innumerable hermits, in the lonesome solitude of their deserts, and their consolation, under the painful rigour of their austerities. Blessed effect of being admitted to a participation of the flesh of our Redeemer in the holy Eucharist !

Perhaps, dear people, you yourselves may have experienced that it is from this divine sacrament
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alone we can draw the strength necessary to encounter our vitious habits ; that strength, which we do not find in the resources of our nature but solely in the grace of Jesus. *I can do all things*, said St. Paul, *in him, who strengthens me* ; although of ourselves we can do nothing. Whence the surprising efficacy of his power appears evidently, in effecting such wonders by instruments so weak, as we are. Hence, dear Christians, be informed of what importance it is to communicate worthily ; and learn, whenever you approach to this heavenly feast, to prepare yourselves with the utmost diligence ; and especially, (as we must, notwithstanding all our efforts, be inferior to the task,) to offer your hearts to Jesus Christ ; entreating him to purify them, and to make them a fit habitation for himself ; whilst, on your part, you endeavour to bring with you every disposition, that may possibly contribute to perfect this sacred action.

But what are these dispositions, you will ask ? They are reducible, I reply, to the three following heads, purity, humility, and divine love.

And when I say that purity is one of the three things, that are essentially requisite to the due performance of this grand work ; I speak not only of a conscience clean from mortal, but even from
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venial sin, as far as is possible, considering the frailty of human nature. For as the former would infallibly render our communion noxious ; so an affection to the latter would certainly deprive us of the fruits, which it should otherwise produce. In the primitive Church, the Deacon, on the point of distributing this sacred food, called aloud, *holy things for the holy* ; as if he had said, resumes St. Chrysostom ; let no one approach, who is not holy ; let none partake of this eucharistic banquet, but such as, besides being exempt from sin, are moreover distinguished by their particular sanctity. For how spotless a purity, says this great Doctor, ought not he to bring with him, who has the honour to be admitted to this divine sacrament ? Ought not the hand, which divides this sacred flesh ; the lips, that are purpled with this adorable blood, to surpass the very solar rays in candour ?

In effect, my brethren ; if, as the Fathers teach unanimously, our flesh is united by communion to the flesh of Christ ; if our breasts become the temples, in which this divine Saviour deigns to reside, how great should be our purity, not only from those more atrocious vices, which the Apostle forbids us to name even, but also from the least defilement whatsoever. A purity, that not only ex-
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cludes all indecent actions, but likewise every word or thought of a criminal tendency. A purity, my friends, that exacts of you to renounce, now and for ever, all swearing, impatience, envy, quarrels, hatred, lying and detraction: to renounce, I say, these and all similar disorders, which are incompatible with the spirit of Christ and the Gospel. This is to prepare yourselves duly, and to put on that purity, which is the first thing required to a worthy communion.

A second, and a no less necessary disposition, is a true humility, which the least degree of faith cannot fail to inspire us with. To sink us into our own nothing it might suffice to be assured that, in communicating, we are personally incorporated with the Almighty Sovereign of heaven and earth. And surely, if St. John, that illustrious precursor of Jesus Christ, canonized by the mouth of truth itself, deems himself unworthy even to loose the latches of his heavenly master's shoes, what would he have thought, to what a pitch of humiliation would he not have stooped, had the Son of God been desirous to unite himself with him, as he does with us? Let us ever have before our eyes, my brethren, as St. Chrysostom inculcates, the honour, we here receive; the table,

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we are invited to. This alone will be sufficient to fill us with the sentiments of a most respectful and profound humility.

With these dispositions the Saints were studious to provide themselves, whenever they partook of these august mysteries. Many of them were so penetrated with the sense of their unworthiness, that, at the sight of the holy viaticum, recalling their exhausted spirits, they went to meet their Saviour on his drawing near: when, prostrate on the ground, in bodies, which already attested the horrors of the grave, they adored this physician of their souls in such lively sentiments of debasement, as if desirous to annihilate themselves.

Let it be your study, Christians, to approach to this awful table with similar dispositions. Touched with regret, at the recollection of the defects, that have accompanied your past communions, say to your God with the Centurion; *Lord! I am not worthy thou shouldst enter under my roof.* Say it, I repeat; but not, as it is too usual, through form and custom; but with a profound respect and a sincere conviction of your unworthiness. No *Lord! I am not worthy* to be favoured with thy sacred company. The frailty of my corruption, my innumerable and daily increasing failings, the grievousness of my sins, my want of love; this

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combination of humbling causes renders me infinitely undeserving of a blessing, which could never be sufficiently estimated, if it was properly understood. No, certainly *I am not worthy*; for although my love for thee should be equal to that of the Seraphims; although I had done as much to promote thy glory, as the Saints; although I should bring with me the sanctity of those celestial spirits, that surround thy throne; still I should be unworthy not only to receive thee into my soul, but to appear even in thy presence. *Lord! I am not worthy.* But my God! my Creator! my Saviour! since thou hast vouchsafed to give thyself for my spiritual food, I will dare to present myself before thee. Washed in the saving waters of repentance, in the spirit of an unfeigned humility, I will run to thy table, there to *take the chalice of salvation*; and filled with gratitude for thy favours, and with confidence in thy mercies, I will proclaim for ever the wonders of thy name.

The third virtue, friends, which I say is necessary to communicate worthily, is divine love; by which I here mean an ardent desire, a sacred impatience to participate in this eucharistic banquet. For if it be allowed that one of the best dispositions to profit by our corporal food is to eat
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it with an appetite; let us confess that to long with a holy eagerness for the table of the Lord is one of the most suitable preparations, we can possibly bring to it. In this august sacrament, the flesh of Christ is to our souls what our daily sustenance is to our bodies. Such is the opinion of all the Fathers; who seem to require that we should feel, in our hearts, at the approach to this bread of life, those eager longings, which the Patriarchs experienced, at the recollection of their promised Messiah, and cry out with still more reason, *Come, O Lord! come, and do not tarry.*

At the sight of that indifference for this sacred banquet, which is but too conspicuous among us, with sorrow I acknowledge I cannot easily conceive how, notwithstanding the tender invitations of our God, who says to us, *take and eat, do ye this in remembrance of me:* 1 Cor. i, 24, there are found so many, that reject the gifts, he offers with such an unbounded liberality. Oh deplorable blindness! It is not usual for us to refuse the acceptance of temporal presents: on the contrary, we are glad, we are eager to receive them. I frequently observe, my brethren, the hardships you submit to, the pains you take, the fatigues you undergo. A very moderate gain is often the scanty recompense of the assiduous labour of one or even

even many days. All your endeavours are for the goods of this life. Others, of a far superiour quality, are held out to you, and you refuse them; scarcely do you think of them, and sometimes you even formally despise them. Christians! did you but *know the gift of God*; did you comprehend it's worth; were you sensible who that Jesus is, that here vouchsafes to give himself to you for your sustenance, your indifference would want no other remedy. There is nothing, take notice, superiour to Jesus Christ. He offers himself to you, and what will he gain by your acceptance? Will it add an atom to his happiness? No, my friends, no, it is not this, it is yourselves, your wants, he has in view; to which unparalleled procedure he is prompted by nothing but by love. *My delight*, he says, *is to be with the children of men*. Prov. vii, 31. Shall not this suffice to rouse your feelings, when you consider what you lose by so criminal a negligence?

Having thus unfolded to you, Christians, with that zeal, with which the God, whom we revere upon our altars, has inspired me, the happiness of uniting yourselves to him by a holy communion, and the dispositions necessary to receive him worthily; what have I more to add, but to address to you those words of Moses, so apposite to the pre-

sent subject, and which he addressed to the Jews, after having proposed to them good or evil, life or death, a blessing or a curse; *I call heaven and earth to witness that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing.* Deut. xxx, 19. Yes, my dear people, I appeal to heaven, and the earth will bear me testimony, that, in inviting you to this sacred banquet, I have proposed to you *life*, and the fountain head of every *blessing*: and that, in supplying you, (by explaining the dispositions required to the just performance of this duty) with a sure preservative against sacrilegious communions, I have pointed out to you the means of avoiding *death*, and the source of the most tremendous maledictions. Profit, I entreat you, by the information, and do your utmost to receive your divine Saviour in these holy dispositions; that the communions, which you make in these days of your salvation, may dispose you for your last, whenever it shall arrive; which, by these means, will become to you the assurance of a glorious immortality. Amen.

T H E

THIRD SUNDAY after PENTECOST.

On Human Respects.

THE SCRIBES AND PHARISEES MURMURED; SAY-
ING, THIS MAN RECEIVETH SINNERS.

Luke, xv, 2.

IN answer to whom, our Redeemer in another passage tells us; *blest is he who shall not be scandalized in me.* Matt. xi, 6. This is the touchstone of his true disciples; this the criterion of their faith. *He*, he says, *that is not with me, is against me*; Luke, xi, 23, thereby excluding from his kingdom those timid Christians, who, instead of

declaring for, are ashamed of him. This criminal bashfulness, this unhappy concern for the opinion of the world, is what I here mean to speak of. But in attacking this fruitful source of scandal, human respects, my friends, it is proper I should apprise you that, if there are occasions, in which it is requisite to despise the judgments of men, unless we would renounce the character of Christians, so there are likewise circumstances, in which it is our duty to pay them a just deference. For your instruction therefore on this head, I here design to teach you to make this just distinction ; by pointing out to you, in my first part, the occasions, in which we must contemn ; and in my second, those, in which we should respect the censures of mankind. But to succeed in the undertaking, let us jointly implore the divine blessing, in a short petition to the spirit of light.

That we must despise the opinions of mankind in general, brethren, is a truth authenticated by religion, and founded on the exalted nature of our vocation. In quality of Christians, says the Apostle, we are called to the happy liberty of the children of God. Whereas, to become slaves to the judgments of men, would be to put shackles on our freedom, and to reduce ourselves to the most abject servitude. Every Christian, in consideration
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of his character, may say with St. Paul; *with me it is a small thing to be judged by any man; because he, that judgeth me, is the Lord.* 1 Cor. iv, 3. Whence it naturally follows that, whenever it is impossible to please both God and Man, there is no room for hesitation; and that we are bound to condemn the censures of the world on the subsequent occasions: First, when they militate against the precepts of the gospel: Secondly, when the honour of God demands it of us; and thirdly, when we cannot pay attention to them without the hazard of salvation.

I say first, when they militate against the precepts of the gospel: and this no doubt, is what St. Peter meant, when he said; *let no one suffer as a murderer or a thief; but if as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God in this name.* 1 Pet. iv, 15. Yes, my friends, it is commendable, to respect the opinions of men, whenever they restrain you from what is unlawful; but when they clash with the injunctions of the gospel, when they would deter you from a close adhesion to the essential duties of religion, so far from being intimidated by the censures of the libertine; you have just reason to rejoice at his contempt, and to *glorify God in the Christian name.*

And

And verily, my brethren, how unhappy should we be circumstanced if, to pay obedience to the divine precepts, it was requisite we should have the approbation of those, who make it their boast to acknowledge no law, and to spurn at every-thing that thwarts their passions? Long since has war been declared between Christ and the world; and while men shall continue to be dissolute, unjust and lovers of themselves, so long will there be censurers of the gospel, and people interested to decry it's morality. And this I repeat after Jesus Christ, our common master. When you go forth, he says to his disciples, to publish my doctrine, you will find as many obstacles among mankind, as they have passions that enslave them. They will despise, hate and persecute you. *But fear them not: fear only him, that can destroy both body and soul in hell.* Matt. x, 28.

Wherefore, dear people; when you tell us, as is sometimes the case, that the apprehension of what the world will say prevents you from hearkening to the voice of Christ; that you are cordially disposed to be good Christians, would but mankind do justice to religion, &c. do not pretend to seek shelter in such excuses. On the contrary, instead of extenuating, you aggravate your guilt. It is, as if you said; although I am satisfied that
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whatever the gospel teaches is indubitably certain ; nevertheless, for fear of displeasing a depraved set of men, I act against my reason, and in contradiction to my conscience ; I betray that virtue, which I approve of and prefer the world to my God. What can there be more dastardly in itself, or more injurious to the Deity ?

That to yield to the impetuosity of a blind passion, is a weakness, of which man is but too capable, I readily conceive. But for a Christian, a person regenerated in the waters of baptism and fed with the bread of life, to be intimidated by the phantom of human respects ; to continue to frequent bad company and those resorts of dissipation, where the least loss is that of his money, rather than incur the ridicule of the profligate ; this, my brethren, I confess appears incomprehensible to me. It is a crime, which is not to be palliated ; a conduct, that reflects disgrace both on the Christian and his religion. *Dear! beloved!* said St. Peter formerly, *if you be reproached for the name of Christ, you shall be happy ; for the honour, the glory, the power of God and his spirit rest upon you.* 1 Pet. iv, 14. And I, by an opposite, although equally conclusive way of reasoning tell you, my friends, that if you cannot resolve on suffering reproaches for the name of Christ, and on exposing
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yourselves to the censures of mankind, you have neither the spirit, nor the grace of our divine religion: the spirit of God resteth not in you.

And to sound this subject to the bottom; who are they, that check you in the pursuit of virtue, and of whose judgments you are so apprehensive? For the most part such, as you would be utterly unwilling to consult on any interesting point; giddy, licentious, dissipated people. Such is the description of those, you fear, in the most serious of all concerns. Is this to act reasonably? I appeal to yourselves: how often, in complaining of the injustice of mankind, have you said that they did not know you; that they wronged you in thinking you capable of such base intentions? How often have you declaimed against the blindness of men, who in general bestow encomiums on vice, and brand virtue with the most unjust aspersions? How often has your conscience secretly told you, that you neither merited the praises, that were given to you, nor the odium, with which you were stigmatized? What can prove more evidently, Christians, that the judgments of the world are frivolous and rash? and of consequence, that it is the extreme of folly to be enslaved to it's caprices?

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But it is not sufficient, brethren, to despise the judgments of the world, when they militate against the gospel; we must moreover contemn them, whenever the honour of God requires it; and this our divine master teaches in the whole course of his deportment. Doubtless he, to whom the secrets of every heart are visible, could not be ignorant of the many unfavourable opinions, which the Scribes and Pharisees had formed of him, as we see in the lesson of this day. Nevertheless, this God of sanctity does not think himself exempted from prosecuting the plan, for which he had become incarnate, on account of their malicious insinuations. The example of their master was a pattern for the Apostles. For not to mention the cruel persecutions, to which their mission exposed them; in what disadvantageous, nay, in what odious colours, were they not painted by the heathens? What do they say of St. Paul at Thessalonica? that he is a disturber of the public peace. What at Athens? that he is a madman, and as such they insult him. Nor were the other Apostles, according to the testimony of the same St. Paul, more respected. They were every-where treated as the most contemptible of beings: *We are made as the refuse of the world.* 1 Cor. iv, 13. Notwithstanding which, did they cease to announce the truths, that
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had rendered them so obnoxious? No; because they were convinced of this evangelical maxim; that it is better to obey God, than men; and that, after all, the most effectual method to stop their mouths is to persevere steadily in the cause of virtue.

For to come to the matter of fact; my friends; what can men say, that should disquiet you so much and give you such uneasiness? Will they say that you are fickle; because you espouse the part of God, after having so long had at heart that of your passions? Happy inconstancy! that enlists you on the side of virtue, and devotes you to the service of your Maker. Will they call you weak and silly? holy folly! a thousand times more enlightened than all the wisdom of the earth; since it induces you to prefer solid and eternal goods to things transitory and perishable. To intimidate you, will they say that you are imprudent, and will not be able to go on with what you have undertaken? Salutary reproaches! which should animate your fervour. That since your conversion you are become good for nothing? fortunate contempt! that engages you to give yourselves wholly to the Lord; since, in the opinion of the world itself, you are henceforth useless to it. Such, dear Christians, are the terrours, that affright you;

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such the obstacles, that stop you in the moment of your conversion, and keep you in a languid suspense between virtue and vice. But would it not be far more honourable to declare in favour of your duty, than to be enslaved to the vain, capricious, interested opinions of mankind? You must disregard their judgments therefore, when the honour of God requires it; and lastly, I add, whenever the great concern of salvation is at stake.

On which ever side we turn ourselves, nothing is to be seen but irresolute Christians; who, although convinced of the emptiness of the world, are yet desirous to keep in with it. But I must inform you, brethren, of a point, which you have perhaps never considered seriously; viz. that nothing is more fraught with danger to your salvation, than this timid prudence, especially at the beginning of your repentance, which is a time for exertion, and not for caution.

And truly, dear people, I can scarcely conceive that a soul, impressed with a horror of its crimes touched with a desire of returning to God, instructed in the solemn truths of religion, in the knowledge of a hell, a heaven, an eternity, can be concerned about the judgments of the world. Beware, my friends; the consequences of such a weakness are truly alarming. For is there not every

every reason to apprehend that, by thus desiring to retain the favour of men, you will resume your cast off fetters, will abandon your Creator, and declare insolently for the creature? Fear the world; this I not only approve of, but recommend to you. Fear it however as your enemy, and not as your judge. Such a fear will put you on your guard, and make you shun it. Break off too intimate a connexion with it, and thus you will avoid those censures, that appear so formidable at present.

Unhappy slaves to human respects! Will you still stand in awe of the opinions of a world, of which you cannot but acknowledge the corruption. Shall nothing be able to inspire you with that spirit of independence, which is the genuine character of Christianity? that steady firmness, that noble intrepidity in the cause of virtue, which raises a man above the judgments of the earth; which attaches him to his duty by indissoluble bonds; which forbids him to allow any rule to act by but the gospel; any judge but his conscience; any reward but that, which God is preparing for him? Solid however as these principles may be, the perverseness of the human mind may still abuse them; for what will it not abuse? Thus, my brethren, if it is beneath a Christian to model his conduct by the opinions of mankind;
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if, generally speaking, their judgments are to be condemned, as you have seen; so likewise there are circumstances, in which religion itself commands us to have a deference for them.

The two great principles, by which all our actions should be squared, are the love of ourselves, and the love of our neighbour: a christian love, understand me, that has no other view but God and salvation. Hence it follows that we must respect the judgments of the world, first, when our own eternal welfare demands it; and secondly, when that our neighbour requires it of us.

We must respect them, I say first, when our own eternal welfare demands it; and this is an incontestable maxim; for the understanding, which, let us distinguish three kinds of judgments, that are found in common life; first, an equitable judgment, by which the world itself, directed solely by the law of nature, arraigns whatever is contrary to christian morality. Secondly, a censorious judgment, by which it is led to overlook nothing in such, as make profession of virtue and piety. And thirdly, a malignant judgment, by which it often misconstrues the most innocent actions. Now the interest of our salvation, I say, requires us to respect each of these three judgments.

Yes,

Yes, dear people, if you are true Christians, attached to the honour of your religion, you should reason thus. The world condemns such grosser sins, as violate it's received notions of decorum; it is inexorable in regard to the professors of devotion, whose slightest errors in it's eyes appear crimes; nay it often carries it's malignity so far, as to censure them on the most trifling grounds: therefore I must refrain from those lawless doings, which the world itself condemns: therefore I must keep a constant guard upon myself, judge myself rigorously, and not pardon even the smallest faults: therefore I must not only avoid evil, but it's very appearance. And why? because, as a Christian, I am bound to be attached to my religion, and to support it's honour, which is inseparably connected with my own.

Such was the reasoning of St. Peter, to confirm the faithful of his days in the practice of virtue. Dearly beloved! he said, the Gentiles have their eyes upon you; conduct yourselves therefore in such a manner, that instead of *speaking against you*, as they are entirely disposed, *considering you by your good works they may give glory to God.* 1 Peter, ii, 12.

Moreover, how extremely perilous would our situation be, if, satisfied with ourselves, we should
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adopt an entire contempt for the opinions of the world? How many, alas! have fallen into the grossest crimes through this mistaken notion? had they only given such opinions their proper weight; had they continued to feel the impresson of that awe, which once made them fearful of doing even the most innocent things, if not clear of suspicion, they might perhaps have been models of virtue to this day. But because they trusted to the integrity of their intentions, and affected to hold cheap the judgments of mankind; what was insignificant at first has become their bane, and disregarded levities have gradually hardned them to the commission of the most barefaced iniquity. There are circumstances then, you see, my friends, in which the interest of our own salvation demands that we should shew a submission to the opinions of the world. Let us next examine briefly on what occasions we must respect them for the welfare of our neighbour.

To comprehend what I am going to say; you must remark two sorts of judgments in this regard; first, a judgment of prevention; i. e. a judgment, by which our neighbour conceives a bad opinion of us on surmises and false reports. Secondly,

condly, a judgment of ignorance and weakness, by which well-meaning, but simple people are scandalized without cause, and imagine they see guilt, where no such thing exists. Now charity, I say, requires us to respect both these kinds of judgments. And for what reason? because we cannot flight them, without hazarding the salvation of our brethren.

It may seem, I confess, my dear people, a very great exertion, to bear the unjust opinions, men may form of us, without complaint. But charity goes still further. Not content with preserving peace, it is desirous to efface the very faintest impressions of any injurious suspicion, the world may have harboured of us. It is true, to speak in general terms, that a Christian should despise the censures and rash judgments of mankind: but he is not to make light of their salvation. What do I say? it is his duty to endeavour to eradicate their prepossessions; either by explaining his conduct, and acquainting them with his intentions; or by evincing the injustice of their prejudices, by an exemplary life. I assert yet more; there are occasions, in which their very ignorance and weakness claim our deference.

Yes, my brethren, there are things indifferent, and no ways unlawful in themselves, from which

we are bound to abstain, rather than become a cause of scandal to our neighbour. Of this matter St. Paul was solicitous to convince the Romans, in the fourteenth chapter of his epistle to them; where he treats of those, who, having embraced Christianity, were still desirous to observe the Jewish rites, in some particulars. *I know*, he says, that no food is unclean of itself: that Christ has done away the curse, which sin had entailed on the productions of the earth: whence he concludes that all sorts of meats may be eat indiscriminately. Nevertheless, he adds, *if meat scandalize my brother, I will never eat it.* 1 Cor. viii, 3. Will you endanger the salvation of him, *for whom Christ died*, for such a trifle? *Will you destroy the work of God for meat?* Rom. xiv. 20. Apply this lesson of the Apostle to yourselves, my friends; and, although the consequence should be that you must part with what is otherwise the most allowable; be ready so to do, when the eternal welfare of your neighbour calls for such a sacrifice.

From this day for ever, dear people, let us be undeceived in regard to the mistaken notions, we had formed on the subject now before us. Not to err on either side, let us observe a due medium, and listen to religion. If, on the one
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hand, she condemns the servile fear of those, who stand in so great awe of the judgments of mankind; on the other, she reprobates the false independence of them, that think themselves so far above the reach of others, as to affect to disregard their censures. Let us learn (and may such be the fruit of this discourse) to despise the judgments of the world, whenever they deter us from complying with the dictates of our duty. Let us respect them, when they have a tendency to promote the interests of virtue. By thus steering clear of both extremes, we may hope to reach safely the port of eternal bliss. Amen.

T H E

FOURTH SUNDAY after PENTECOST.

On the Good Employment of Time.

MASTER, WE HAVE LABOURED ALL THE NIGHT,
AND HAVE TAKEN NOTHING.

Luke, v, 5.

Whatever is written in the Gospel, Christians, is designed for our instruction, to the end that by the consolation, we receive from reading or meditating on those sacred oracles, we may be confirmed in the expectations of futurity. The lessons, which the portion of it allotted for this Sunday exhibits, are many : but not here to enter into a detail of all it's circumstances, I have se-

lected the fifth verse of it, which sets before us a subject of the most interesting nature ; the right use, I mean, and employment of time.

Master, says St. Peter, *we have laboured all the night, and have taken nothing ; but at thy word I will let down the net* : which when he had done, adds the Evangelist, they caught such a prodigious quantity of fish that the *net broke*. Here, brethren, is the information, to which I entreat you to attend.

St. Peter, obedient to the word of Christ, retrieves, by a single cast of his net, the many hours, which, during the night, had been wasted in useless labour. In a like manner we, by one sole action performed in the name and by the virtue of Jesus Christ, may still make good all the time, that we have hitherto thrown away on fruitless and ungrateful toil. We have laboured for the world, we have laboured for creatures, *we have laboured all the night* ; and still our hands are empty. But let us obey the voice of the Son of God ; let us work under his direction ; and a short space will suffice to recover the many years, we have lost in indolence, and perhaps in sin. We have resembled the labourers in the vineyard, who stood idle all the day. Nevertheless, if we now take up, and employ in a proper manner this *last hour*, that

is to say, the time, which is still at our disposal, we shall receive an equal reward with those, who *have born the burthen of the day and the heats.*

To this happy resolution I will here make it my business to excite you, friends; first, by representing the motives, that should engage every Christian to a right use of his time; and secondly, by explaining to you in what the proper use of it consists. That my endeavours may not be fruitless, nor your attention solicited in vain, let us, in the first place, implore the grace of God; which he will never refuse to them, that apply to him with the disposition of sincerity and the fervour of a good will.

To narrow the subject now before me, Christians, into as small a compass as it's nature will admit of, there are three considerations, I affirm, respecting time, that establish it's immense value. It is precious; it is useful; it is irreparable.

The worth of a thing we usually estimate either by it's price, by it's rarity, or by it's being in a particular manner our own. Which ever of these sides we choose to view it on, we shall find time to be the brightest jewel of our inheritance.

The Sovereign Being is the author of time, no less than of every other part of the creation. He gave it to man originally, that he might employ it
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in his service ; instead of which, abusing it by his crimes, the offending Adam forfeited it in an instant, and deserved to have no further portion of it allowed either to him or to his offspring, for the expiation of his disobedience. And this must have been the case, had not our Redeemer, by restoring to man his abjured rights, regained for him that time, which sin had stript him of. But what did it cost him ? Nothing less than his own most sacred blood. Oh ye heavens ! what an inestimable price ! the time, that I now enjoy, is the purchase of the blood of my God ! how pressing a motive not to lose a moment of it !

But what still enhances the value of our time, dear people, is that, of all things, it is the most rare, and the least at our command. No portion of it, but the present, can be justly termed our own : now this present includes but a moment ; so that, in fact, one sole moment of it is at our disposal. The days, says St. Augustin, which we style ours, slide off almost before they come ; and when they arrive, they disappear, so rapidly that we can scarce believe they have existed. The time past is fled beyond our call ; the future is but in expectation ; and no sooner does it shew itself, than again it vanishes. *Son, says the wise man, observe*
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the time. Ecclus. iv, 23. Be sure to keep a watchful eye upon it, or it will certainly elude thy vigilance.

Nevertheless, rare as time is, one advantage still accompanies it, viz. that the lot of it, which we possess, is in a peculiar manner our own. Yes, my friends, it is ours; and even, as St. Bernard says, it is the only thing that we can truly term so. Honours, riches &c. are not ours; they are adventitious; they are foreign to us. But time, Christians, is essentially our own: it is a property, which nothing, death itself not excepted, can deprive us of. However, we may be prevented, you will say, from praying, from assisting at the divine service, from attending instructions and the like, which alone can render our time beneficial to us. I allow it; but I will also tell you what perhaps you are not acquainted with; that you may make these very hindrances subservient to your welfare, and so many means of salvation; so that, to speak accurately, it is in the power of no one to rob you of your time. Precious then must it be most certainly; since the price of it is so great; since it is so rare; since it appertains to us so peculiarly. Let us proceed to it's utility.

Raise up your eyes, dear brethren, to that seat of bliss, where the favoured soul, in the enjoyment

ment of it's God, exults in the possession of every happiness, that heaven can bestow. Enquire of it the worth of time, and it will tell you, with St. Paul; a *momentary tribulation* *worketh for us, above measure exceedingly, an eternal weight of glory.* 2 Cor. iv, 17. With what a heart-felt satisfaction does it look back upon the time it spent so profitably, a part of it in prayer, and a part of it in superintending the education of it's children and the charge of it's family? It recalls the measures, that it took, to avoid not only all dangerous meetings, in which time is abused to criminal purposes; but likewise those societies, of which idleness is the basis, and loss of time the smallest evil. How agreeable is this remembrance to it? how sweet the recollection of time employed so successfully in gaining eternal happiness?

On the other side, my friends; descend for a moment into those regions of woe, where *everlasting horror dwells*. See the grief, that harrows up the sinner, for having spent the time his God had given him for the purpose of salvation; in the wild pursuits of passion; his sorrow, at the thought of days wasted in gaming, in drinking, in debauchery; his piercing, but unavailable regret, for the loss of the many hours, which might have been so serviceable to his welfare; but which unfortunately

fortunately he has perverted to his ruin; that precious season of Lent, these Sundays, those holidays, which he rather chose to spend in an ale-house or idle company, than at his devotions, or attending to the word of God, which would have directed him into the road to heaven. Hence his dark reflections, his violent rage, his unutterable despair. Here, dear people, let us be taught to make a right use of our time, and to turn it to profit, *while we have it*; for the *night is coming on, in which no one can work*. John ix, 4. And when you waste this talent, know that you do yourselves the greatest of all injuries; since, besides that it is most precious and useful, the loss of it is also irrecoverable; which is the last reflection I shall suggest to evince the care, with which you ought to husband it.

There is no evil in nature without it's remedy. Thus, a decayed health may be recovered, a house consumed by fire may be rebuilt, a broken fortune may be retrieved &c. but time, and time alone is irreparable. Once past, it never can be recalled; it glides away imperceptibly, to appear no more; the Deity himself cannot restore it. At present, Christians, it depends upon yourselves alone to employ it well; but if unhappily you lose it, it must be lost for ever. You have it now in your power
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to avoid this or that criminal action; but if you commit it, it will be eternally true to say that you have done so. The repentance of David was most exemplary: the time, he gave to pleasure, short; that, which he spent in sorrow, long, very long indeed; nevertheless, while the world shall subsist, in perpetuating the memory of his distinguished conversion, mankind shall also be informed of his adultery and murder.

Who, says an ancient author, shall restore the years, we now squander away so unprofitably? O God! thou alone dost know the irremediable loss we suffer, by the omission of so many good works, as we have it daily in our power to perform; each of which would produce eternal, never-failing fruit.

Make then, I repeat, a right use of time, while you have it, brethren. The present is the only season. For allowing you to have in reverence as much of it, as you have already wasted, it may not be so applicable to the great work of salvation. The more we advance in years, the less capable we become of labour. How then can we expect to retrieve the years, that we have lost, in the decrepid feebleness of age?

Be persuaded to begin from this very hour to redeem the time, that you have so unfortunately thrown

thrown away. Wait not for that awful day, in which it will rise up against you, and unveil, in the face of the universe, the manner, in which you have squandered it. Then shall you be sensible of it's value, when you shall hear the asseverations of the Angel, mentioned in the Apocalypse, swearing that *time shall be no longer*. In vain shall you then attempt to profit by it: it is but just that he, who refuses to make use of a thing, when in his power, should be deprived of it, when he is willing so to do. You have idled away, you have mispent, you have abused your time, will the Angel say; and *by him, that liveth for ever and ever, time shall be no longer*. Apoc. x. 6. Such, dear people, are the motives, that should induce you to a good employment of your time; it only now remains to see in what this employment of it may consist.

And here, my friends, in the first place let me entreat you to make a reflection with me, which perchance you may have often made, but never with due consideration. How great must our folly be, so frequently, and with such facility, to abuse that time, which is to decide our eternal doom! You think you employ it properly, because your days are taken up with almost incessant occupations. The usurer may say the same,
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whose every moment is devoted to the service of iniquity. No, brethren, no. The hurry of life and the right use of time are by no means similar. But what more then, will you say, is required of us? I will tell you briefly; to sanctify, as much as possible, all your actions; to refer every day and every hour of each day to your Creator; and if you are humble, sober, diligent &c. to strive to be so, not from the influence of temporary considerations, as many heathens have; but from a principle of obedience to the law of God, who exacts these virtues of you: in a word, whatsoever you do, to do it not with a view to please men and court their esteem; but to honour the Deity, and promote his service.

But, my dear friends, what will assuredly appear in judgment against us is our laborious assiduity for the affairs of this world, and our well-known indolence in regard to the future. The concern of salvation is the most important, not to say the sole business of our life. Notwithstanding which, it is likewise the affair, we neglect the most, and to which by far the least portion of our time is allotted. Was I to take to pieces the economy of your days, I should find an allowance marked out for every thing, but this. So many hours for meals, so many for diversions &c. while eternity

is scarce permitted to put in it's claim to one poor quarter. A short morning prayer, hurried over precipitately, entitles you, you think, to spend the remainder of the day as fancy may direct; and for excuse, you allege that you are occupied with concerns, which will not admit of any further leisure. But let me tell you, brethren; the man, who can find time to make himself acquainted with the secrets of his business, to become a good merchant, a good farmer, a good mechanic, or the like, will never be dispensed with at the bar of the divine justice, for not having found sufficient leisure to make himself a good Christian. "No, says a very heathen; we have no reason to complain of the want of time; our life is long enough for all purposes, if duly arranged." It is not time then it is ourselves that, are in fault, and highly censurable for the mismanagement or improper application of it.

But methinks I hear some one say; must I then be always praying, always at some serious work or other, without being allowed any leisure for recreation? Do not mistake me, Christians; I should be very unwilling to lay a greater burden on you, than you can bear. I know that relaxation is frequently necessary: but nevertheless I am sensible, and so must you, if you will but be candid,

candid, that there is a wide difference between a casual amusement, which is often requisite to unbend the mind, and a perpetual round of dissipation, that excludes every serious employment. We should act in regard to diversions, as we do in respect to our meals, which nature calls for according to her feelings; that is we should take them when they are wanted, and by a well-directed intention, make them subservient to more interesting concerns.

How then must we employ our time to spend it lawfully? We must employ it, I answer, in the discharge of our duties; of which, my friends, there are two principal and distinct branches, the duties of religion, and the duties of our respective callings: or in other words, the duties of Christians, and those of men.

In the first place then, as Christians, you are obliged to begin and to end each day with prayer; to raise your hearts frequently in the intermediate time to God, referring all your actions to him; to sanctify the Sundays and such Festivals, as may be enjoined; to feed your souls with the bread of his sacred word; to inform yourselves, and instruct your families in the way of salvation; to frequent the sacraments &c. In short, as Christians, you are bound to attend much more to the welfare of
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your souls, than that of your bodies, according to the saying of your great master; *what will it avail a man to gain the whole world, if he loses his soul?* Matt. xvi, 26.

Alas! my brethren, to how many of you might I address those words of the Father of the family; *why stand you here all the day idle?* Matt. xx. 6. Will you answer me with those labourers, *because no one hath hired us*, ib. and we have nothing to do? What! have you no families to take care of; no children to instruct and initiate in the service of God; no servants to instruct in the principles of faith and morality; or to make acquainted with the practice of confession, communion, and other duties? *You have nothing to do?* Is there no one sick, to whom to extend a supporting hand? no one in affliction, whose tears you may dry up? no other good works to practice, which are never wanting to them, that look for them? *You have nothing to do?* Are not your sins to be expiated and your God appeased; hell to be avoided and heaven gained? Say rather that you have many things to do, of which you have thought but little. Was there ever a more gross delusion?

Besides the obligations of a Christian, it is incumbent on every one to acquit himself with fidelity of the functions of his particular state
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and calling. The variety of these states, with which the world is chequered, is ordained by the Almighty himself; and it is his will that each one should comply with the demands of that department, in which his supreme hand has placed him. Whenever therefore, Christians, your time is taken up by the duties of your lawful calling, be that calling what it may, you may deem it well employ'd. For as the neglect of these relative duties is highly blamable and sinful, so is an exact and diligent compliance with them a proof of true devotion and solid piety. *Because, good servant, thou hast been faithful in smaller things, thou shalt enter into the joy of thy Lord.* Matt. 25.

I cannot, I own, dear people, cast my eyes upon your conduct in this respect without grief; nor comprehend how, instead of employing your time in the discharge of these twofold obligations, you throw it away so lavishly on emptiness and trifles. Surely, you must be ignorant of it's value. Instead of managing it with prudence, and improving the advantages it offers, your sole ambition seems to be to hasten it's speed, and make it evaporate still more quickly. Is it thus you act, I repeat, my friends, in the concerns of the world, although every thing of the kind, in competition with your salvation, is most trivial and insignificant? To
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ensure success to your temporal affairs, each moment is turned to account; if a single one be lost, you are inconsolable; and however great your assiduity may be, you are still afraid of wanting time. But when salvation is at stake, it hangs upon your hands, and you are only apprehensive of having a greater share of it, than you know how to dispose of. Alas! brethren, the time will come, when you shall see your error; and when, viewing things through their proper medium, your sentiments shall be extremely different on this article. The time will come, when we shall regret the days, that we employ so ill at present, and our regret shall be useless. The time will come, when we should be glad to give the world, if at our disposal, to recover some of those precious moments, which we now fool away so wantonly.

To day however, Christians, obeying the call of heaven, be advised to redeem the time; that is spent, by works of penance; and to endeavour to regain the past, by a right use of that, which is present. So many years, let us say, we have wasted in idleness; and so few hours have we employed in the concerns of futurity. Nevertheless, the mercy of our God still affords us a remedy;

medy ; which is to recollect, like the holy Ezechias, our lost years *in the bitterness of our souls*, and thus to recall and bring them back. Let us learn, my brethren, and may such be the effect of this exhortation ; let us learn, I say, to manage our time. Let us redeem the past ; let us take advantage of the present ; and let us resolutely determine to apply the future to a proper use. How rich might we soon become, were we thus provident ? Not one of our actions, that would not merit a reward ; not a word, not a thought, not a motion, that would not be deserving of eternal bliss ; not an instant of our time, that would not be worth a whole eternity. How precious the life thus devoted to the business of salvation ! Every moment would exceed years, every day surpass whole ages in real value. How great then, Christians, is our folly to refuse to enrich ourselves at so cheap a rate, to make our fortunes at so small an expense !

May the solemn truths, which I have here announced to you, dear people, be ever present to your eyes, and engage you to make henceforward a pious use of that invaluable time, which the Supreme Being may vouchsafe to grant you. Let us regret : attend, my friends, for the following

is the only fruit I wish you to reap from this discourse ; let us regret *the past*, by a sincere sorrow ; let us cultivate *the present*, by an industrious diligence ; let us anticipate *the future*, by that salutary fear, which is productive of salvation. Long since have we merited to be bereaved of this precious treasure : because we have long been barren trees in the fruitful garden of the Church. But O Lord ! since it has pleased thy goodness still to preserve us, and still to afford us time, we will endeavour to profit by it, and to labour effectually in the acquisition of virtue and the performance of all good works ; in the sweet confidence of receiving from thy hands the reward of a blissful immortality hereafter. Amen.

FIFTH SUNDAY after PENTECOST.

On the Forgiveness of Injuries.

LEAVE THY OFFERING BEFORE THE ALTAR, AND

GO FIRST TO BE RECONCILED TO THY BROTHER.

Matt. v, 4.

NEVER does the Son of God express himself with greater firmness, or speak with more authority, than when he imposes on us the precept of not only loving our neighbours, but of being reconciled to our enemies. Let us weigh the terms, this adorable Saviour uses, to obviate the vain pretences, that self-love may suggest, to make us refuse obedience to his injunction. When he commands us to *leave our offering before the altar*

altar &c. he does not direct us so to do, only when we have any thing against our *brother*; but also when we recollect that *he hath any thing against us*. To know therefore that we have offended him, is a sufficient reason to be obliged to quit the altar: or if, according to the dictates of prudence, you ought not to interrupt the sacrifice, to go to one you may have injured; go to him, says St. Augustin, in mind at least, if not in person.

Add to this the cogent motives, Christ here proposes, to determine us to a full and entire reconciliation. The first of which is that our enemy is our *brother*; *go and be reconciled to thy brother*. The second, the punishment, with which he threatens us, in case of a refusal; *he shall be in danger of the judgment*. But let us enter into a longer detail of a subject, which may be considered as one of the most important of the Christian doctrine; and heaven grant that I may see an end to all enmities among such, as profess the name of Christ. To do my part towards which, my friends, I will here endeavour to make you comprehend both the motives, and the rules of this most necessary branch of charity. First then, we must forgive: secondly, we must forgive cordially: two considerations, which, if you ponder

with attention, will make you sensible how short you fall of your duty in this respect. But first, let us direct our hearts to heaven, and implore the succour of it's gracious influence.

To vindicate the law, that commands us to love our enemies; and to inspire you with charitable sentiments in regard to those, that have offended you, it might suffice to tell you, brethren, what the prophets told the Jews, whenever they announced any thing distasteful to flesh and blood, *so says the Lord*. But I will do more; and to convince you effectually that it is a matter of indispensable necessity to forgive your adversaries, I will shew you that the law, which enjoins this precept, is of all others the most clear, the most equitable and the most advantageous.

Is there, dear people, in the whole Gospel, a law more strongly marked, more universally recommended, or more enforced by menaces, than this I am speaking of? *You have heard*, says Christ, *it hath been said to them of old; thou shalt love thy neighbour and hate thy enemy. But I say to you, love your enemies; do good to them, that hate you; pray for them, that persecute you.* Matt. v, 34, 44. Is there any obscurity in these words? any room for cavilling? Could he have expressed the obligation of forgiving your brethren more clearly,

clearly, than by commanding you to love those very enemies, who have unjustly injured you?

Christ has cleared up a law, which the Jews looked upon as obscure. Christ has assigned it's true meaning to a law, which they misinterpreted. Christ, in the new Testament, has perfected a law, which was incomplete under the old. *I*, he says, altogether God as I am, *I say to you, love your enemies*. Is not this sufficient to compel you to obedience? It is God, that here commands; it is God, who, to try your fidelity, tells you in a tone of authority, *love your enemies*. To such explicit orders, what have you to reply? Did our blessed Saviour ever deliver himself in a style more firm or more majestic? He speaks like a Sovereign; *I say to you, love your enemies*. Nor does he content himself with explaining his intentions once; he repeats the same injunction in almost every page. *Forgive*, he says, as often as there may be occasion: remit whatever your brother is indebted to you: be merciful: *by this shall all men know that you are my disciples*. John xiii, 35.

Moreover, he threatens the persons, who do not love their enemies, and refuse to pardon them, with the weight of his indignation. *Judgment without mercy to him, that hath not done mercy*. James ii, 13. No, my friends, no; God will never

never pardon your sins, unless you forgive your neighbour the offences, he may commit against you; he will never receive you into his friendship, unless you receive your brother into your good graces; he will be implacable in your regard, if you be inexorable to your fellow-creatures. Whatever other imaginable virtues you may be endued with, if you have a hard heart, a heart obstinately bent on not pardoning those, that offend you, look not for salvation. The sole alternative, you have, is to forgive, or to be lost. The gospel, by which you must be tried, affords no other.

O man! proud man! dust and ashes, as thou art! stoop to a law, which the Deity has made both practicable by his grace, and just by his authority. For what, Christians, is there more equitable, than a law, whose purport is to procure for us the peaceable enjoyment of life? Does not experience teach us that to be obstinate in refusing to make up matters, is the way to multiply our enemies?

It is a certain fact, that, in this case, you will find people take pleasure in thwarting you, in watching your actions, in putting a wrong construction on them, without your well knowing wherefore; and all that you can gain, says Ter-

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tullian, by resenting it, will be a real loss, in the sacrifice of our conscience and peace of mind.

Nevertheless, how usual a thing is it to take unreasonable exceptions? Such a one, for instance, neglects to take off his hat to you, or says something, that gives offence: immediately you set him down as an enemy and an ill-wisher. But on what, I ask, is this rash judgment founded? Must he feel the weight of your resentment, for having said or done something, in which perhaps malevolence had not the smallest share? But even allowing the injury to be real, is it your business to revenge it? has not the Lord reserved this right to himself? and is it not a crying injustice for you to fly in the face of his command? A just command, and which establishes an exact proportion between you and your opponent. To day your brother offends you, and may not you perhaps to-morrow offend him, and stand in need of that indulgence, which is now solicited in his favour? Do you think that, if you suffer from others, others do not suffer equally from you? Have not all mankind their humours, their caprices, their defects? You complain of your brethren and their injustice: how often have you given them cause to make similar complaints of you? Would you like to be reproached with the
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spiteful things, you have said of them; with your biting raileries; with the secret steps, you have taken, to humble, and to cross them in their affairs? Be then but candid, Christians; if you find the law, that enjoins the forgiveness of injuries, so equitable, when it orders others to pardon you the grossest insults; can you, without the most glaring inconsistency, deem the same law unjust, when it lays the like obligation on you, in their regard?

To shew the great advantages, that result from the forgiveness of injuries, I will not here mention the mischief, that arises to particular bodies of people, and even to whole kingdoms, from a spirit of animosity and rancour. For without recurring to human principles, ought not the sole profession of Christianity to be sufficiently forcible to disarm your vengeance? Ye children of mount Calvary! disciples of the gospel! open the sacred volumes, by which we must be tried, and you will there read your condemnation, in every page almost; and this, not only if you will not pardon, but also, if you refuse to love your enemies, after the example of your Saviour. In one passage, you are taught that your offering will not be acceptable, unless you *first go and be reconciled*. In another, you are informed that God will measure his mercy

to you by that, which you yourselves shew to others; *blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.* Every where, you are apprized that your sins will not be forgiven, unless you forgive; *I say not till seven times, but till seventy times seven times.* Matt. xviii. 22.

So far then from complaining of the severity of the law, which obliges us to pardon them, that we are at variance with; rather let us admire the advantages, it holds out to us. *Forgive, and you shall be forgiven.* Luke vi. 37. Where, my friends, is the difficulty of this divine injunction? or what excuse can you allege for not obeying it? Neither weakness of constitution, nor multiplicity of business can justify your non-compliance; since neither health nor time is wanted to accomplish it; all that is required being a sincere will and a good resolution, of which you should always be the masters.

Confess therefore, brethren, that you are highly criminal, when you refuse to forgive. Blush at your want of a christian spirit; and resolve to imitate those generous martyrs; who, in opinion of the Fathers, manifested their courage more conspicuously by pardoning injuries, than by suffering death; who prayed for the authors of their torments, and addressed their vows to heaven for their

their very executioners. They were men, as you are: when will you forgive, as they did?

It is Christ himself that commands us to pardon; and he likewise himself shall serve as a model, to shew us how to pardon in a proper manner. In the first place then, I say, we must forgive our enemies, as Christ forgives us: and in the second, we must forgive them, as he forgave his executioners and most implacable enemies.

The perfection of a Christian consists in bearing a resemblance to his God. Now in what respect can he resemble him the most? in forgiving injuries. *Love your enemies; says Christ, do good to them that hate you; that you may be the children of your heavenly Father; Matt. v, 44.* But I will endeavour to point out to you more particularly, dear people, in what manner the Lord acts in your regard; that you may know how to act in relation to your adversaries. Rebellious as we are, he bears with us. He anticipates us. Nor is this sufficient. He waits for us; and, after having long expected, he receives us, whenever we are willing to return to him.

First, God has born with us: and when? at the very time, when, regardless of his voice, we raised the standard of rebellion in opposition to his claims. What would have been our fate, dear

Christians,

Christians, had he then followed the impulse of his justice? Secondly, not only does he bear with, but he anticipates us. Notwithstanding he is our Sovereign, he vouchsafes to invite and to recall us. He does not spare his paternal solicitude; and one would rather think that he was desirous to obtain some favour of us, than that he offered us a pardon. Thirdly, he awaits us. Astonishing prodigy of his love! for if *he waiteth*, says the Prophet, it is that *he may have mercy on us*. *Is. xxx, 18.* Our ungrateful delays do not disgust him; he seems resolved to set aside the demands of his justice, that he may indulge his mercy without restraint. And fourthly, he gives us a still stronger evidence of his affection: for as soon as we become sensible of our misery, he stretches out his arms to us, and lavishes his gifts upon us with redoubled profusion. An alteration of the heart suffices to erase the past, and to re-establish us fully in his good graces.

Can we, my friends, flatter ourselves with the idea of pardoning our enemies as the Deity pardons us? First, as I have said, he bears with us. Do we bear with them that do us any injury? rather do we not break out into invectives and harsh words? do we not try to make others espouse our quarrels and our enmities? Secondly, God anticipates us: he is the first to recall and seek us. Is

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our comportment such in regard to our adversaries? We consent to an accommodation; but we are unwilling to take the first step towards it. I am the party offended, you say; it is not my business to be forward in making advances. There are circumstances, I own; in which religion does not oblige us to be beforehand in acts of civility with the persons that have ill-used us. But observe, Christians; this can seldom be your case; and as each of you thinks himself injured, neither of you can keep back with any propriety. Besides, to be obliged to take the first step, although you should be the party offended even, it is enough that your indifference gives scandal. Thirdly, God waits for us. Is any thing farther requisite to confound those revengeful spirits, that on the slightest affront demand satisfaction, and pretend to exact the most demeaning concessions? Fourthly, in fine, he stretches out his arms to us, as soon as we return to him. Do we copy this divine model? Has any one made an unsuccessful attempt in regard to his enemy? he quickly gives it up; I have done my part, he says; such a one does not deserve to be forgiven. But I ask you, brethren; after so many crimes, as your conscience may reproach you with, did you merit the pardon of your sins, which you have received? I ask you if you

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can hope to be saved, while you act in contradiction to your model and legislator; who teaches, and commands you to forgive without measure, without bounds? Let us try ourselves by these rules, and reform our prejudices. *As the Lord hath forgiven you, so do you also.* Coloss. iii, 13. On this head, the gospel exhibits a remarkable instance for our direction. Jesus Christ tells us of a servant, who, oppressed with the weight of his debts, and prostrate at his master's feet, implores a delay of payment: in consequence of which, he obtains not only the favour he sues for, but also a total discharge. After so affecting a proof of benevolence, he meets with a fellow-servant, who was indebted to him; though for a trifle, in comparison with the sum, which he himself had owed to his Lord. He demands immediate payment; and throws the other, who could not then satisfy him, into prison. But his barbarous cruelty does not long remain unpunished. The master, informed of his vile behaviour, immediately recalls his words, and gives him up to the ministers of justice. And so likewise, says Christ, *shall my heavenly Father do to you, if you forgive not every one his brother from your hearts.* Matt. xviii, 35. You will be treated as you treat your neighbour. If you hate him, God will hate you. If you seek his ruin, God will seek yours.

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As you behave to him, so God will behave to you. *So likewise shall my heavenly Father do.*

Alas ! dear people, what answer will you be able to make, when the Almighty shall say to you, as his Lord to the above miscreant, *I forgave thee all the debt, shouldst not thou then have had compassion on thy fellow-servant ?* What excuse will you then offer ? shall it be the magnitude of the offence ? but were you ever so ill used by others, he will reply, as I have been by you ? Nevertheless, I overlooked it. And what has been your conduct ? You have indulged your resentment ; you have made it a point to denounce vengeance ; and the like rule I will now observe in the decision of your doom. You have often said to me ; *forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them, that trespass against us ;* and you shall be heard : You did not pardon ; no more will I then. I will demand the whole debt. No forgiveness for him, who would not forgive. *So likewise shall my heavenly Father do to you.*

Follow me, ye revengeful Christians ! exclaimed St. Augustin, heretofore ; come to mount Calvary ; fix your eyes on the cross of Christ ; and learn from his deportment the manner, in which you should love your enemies. *Father !* he cries out, *forgive them.* But for whom does he intercede ? for those, who are even then in the act of putting him-

him to a most inhuman and unjust death. He prays for them, at the very time they are triumphing over his apparent weakness. He excuses them, *they know not what they do*, Luke, xxiii, 34. and offers up the very blood, which he is spilling, for the pardon of their crimes. But is it for them alone he petitions? Is it not for you also, ye vindictive spirits! who are perhaps equally insensible to his example and to his love? His blood, this same blood, that solicits the divine mercy in your behalf, implôres it also for your enemies.

Let us frequent the school of Christ, my friends, and there learn the practice of that charity, which he came principally to teach. He loved his enemies, he prayed for them. Can we refuse to imitate him? Interrogate your hearts, and let them be your vouchers. From the time your adversaries forsook the path of virtue, have they been the objects of your zeal? Can you say that you are grieved at their unhappiness, or that you offer up your prayers for their conversion? Where are the sighs you send to heaven in their behalf? And are you not obligated so to do, after the example Christ has given you? He is your Master, your God, your Saviour. Was he content with merely pardoning? Satiated with ignominy, drenched with

gall, suspended on a cross, did he simply forget the barbarity of his persecutors? Did he not pray for, suffer for, and even die for them?

If there be any of you, Christians, that still remain unconvinced, as to the obligation of forgiving, and the manner, in which you should forgive: if all that I have said be lost upon you; let such, (if any such there be I say) behold their God struggling with death. Will they value the master no more than his minister? Shall the sight of him be as ineffectual as my words? Behold, ye implacable men! your Redeemer fastened to a cross, his hands and feet pierced with nails. What was it impelled him to submit to this extremity of torments, but his desire to satisfy his Father's justice for your sins? Was he disposed to pursue you with that hatred, with which you pursue your neighbour, for some pretended injury or other, where would you now be? In hell, the victims of an unquenchable fire. But no, dear brethren, I will judge more favourably of you, and believe that you are determined to copy your divine model Jesus Christ; that you will not let the day pass without endeavouring to effect a reconciliation with whoever may have injured you; and that you are now doing in your hearts what you purpose to do by

by word of mouth, as soon as possible. Moreover, it is advisable that they, who have been privy to your enmities, should be made witnesses to your reconcilment; that, as they have been scandalized at the one, they may be edified by the other. These are the most effectual measures, you can resort to, to obtain peace in this life and happiness in the next. Amen.

On the Spirit of Mercy.

WE HAVE COMMISSIONED THE MULTITUDE
Mark vii. 2.

THE GOSPEL of this Sunday, brethren, affords us an opportunity of expatiating on the influence of the Spirit of Mercy; and of showing you, in what manner we are to imitate His goodness, that we are in duty bound to do to whom all things are possible. (Mark vii. 2.) And who commands his Son to love him, as upon the just; of a God, in whose sight, every man is false. How, then, can we have occasion to entertain you

nevertheless, as soon as possible. Moreover, it is advisable that they who have been guilty of
~~your children, should be made witnesses to your~~
 reconciliation; that, as they have been scandalized
 at the one, they may be comforted by the other.
 There are the most effectual measures, you can re-

[SIXTH SUNDAY after PENTECOST.]

On the Spiritual Works of Mercy.

I HAVE COMPASSION ON THE MULTITUDE.

Mark viii, 2.

THE gospel of this Sunday, brethren, affords me an opportunity of expatiating on the interesting article of providence; and of shewing you, in order to excite your confidence, that we are in the hands of a God, to whom all things are subjected; of a God, who commands his sun to shine upon the wicked, as upon the just; of a God, in short, with whose *mercy the earth is filled*. However, as I may hereafter have occasion to entertain
 you

you on this matter, I shall not touch upon it at present. But, instead of it, I will lay before you a subject of instruction, no less necessary, drawn from those tender words of our amiable Saviour; which form my text; *I have compassion on the multitude*; endeavouring to kindle in your hearts the love of your neighbour, and awaken you to his wants.

I mean then here, I say, for your information, to elucidate a point, which, although particularized in the rudiments of religion, has never, perhaps, made a sufficient impression upon your minds: viz. that of the works of charity, which we are bound to practice, there are two kinds; the one spiritual, the other corporal. The corporal works of mercy consist in feeding, in clothing, in lodging the necessitous and in lending them a prompt and efficacious hand, under the various pressures of their condition. Happy the persons, whom the bounty of a gracious Deity has empowered to do this effectually! But as this is a blessing, which falls only to the lot of *the few* comparatively; and as it is decreed that the fate of us *all* must be determined by the article of benevolence towards our brethren; our divine Redeemer, ever attentive to procure for us the means of salvation, (in defect of our ability to

comply with the precept of corporal alms) prescribes, in regard to our neighbour, alms of another sort, the obligation of which is universal and indispensable. I mean spiritual alms-deeds; which consist in instructing the ignorant, correcting sinners, giving counsel to the doubtful, comforting the afflicted, bearing the defects of others patiently, and being animated with zeal for the salvation of all mankind, and holding out to them the attractive light of good example. Such, Christians, is the subject, which I design at present to set before you, for your edification. May your instruction correspond with my wishes; and may the Sovereign Being contribute his favourable assistance towards it, through the mediation of his beloved Son, as we will previously implore.

The first of the works of mercy spiritual, that you are obliged, to practise, dear people, is to instruct your ignorant neighbour, either by yourselves, or by the means of others. St. Paul tells the Thessalonians, that amidst the variety of his labours and sufferings he had announced to them a sound and pure doctrine, with the sole view of pleasing God, without interest, without flattery, without an eye to any human respects whatever: that he had treated them with the like attention as a parent would his children, exhorting them,

con-

consoling them, and conjuring them to behave themselves in a manner worthy of the God, they served, and of the happiness, for which they were candidates. The same Apostle thus appeals to the people of Ephesus; *you know how I have kept back nothing that could be profitable; but have preached it to you, and taught you publicly, and from house to house.* Ac. xx, 20. With a like zeal, with a similar benevolence you, my friends, should communicate to each other the lights you have received from God, and the instructions you may have learnt.

But on you, Parents and Superiours! is this duty of informing the ignorant peculiarly incumbent. Fathers and Mothers! you are indispensably obliged to instruct your children; and you, Masters and Mistresses! your servants, in the dictates of our divine religion. If you are incapable of doing it by your own means, to fulfil this duty of charity, which you owe to them, you are bound to send them to the house of God for catechism &c.; which point the person, that neglects, detains the truth in captivity, as St. Paul expresses it, and is *worse than a heathen*; nay *he hath denied his faith*, he says, and apostatized. 1 Tim. v. 8.

The next thing, which this spiritual mercy claims of us, is to admonish sinners, and, if possible,

fible, to open their eyes to the error of their ways. Although sinners, they do not cease to be our brethren; and as such, the crimes, that lay them open to the judgments of the Deity, ought to excite our compassion. Alas! dear Christians, what object can there be more deserving of our pity, than to see our fellow-members sporting heedless under the naked sword of the divine justice? We see it with the eyes of the body, because we are but too often witnesses to their sins: we see it with the eyes of faith, which discovers to us, in their wickedness, the greatness of their misery. The view of the corporal necessities of the wretched, especially if they be allied to us, inclines us to succour them as soon as possible: and shall not religion prompt us to redress their spiritual grievances, if in our power.

But to correct your brother wait, Christian! till a favourable opportunity presents itself, and till, the heat of passion being subsided, there may be reasonable grounds to hope for success. Without which precaution, this duty of charity will only be the occasion of anger and violence, through the indiscretion of your zeal. Whilst on the contrary, watching your opportunity, and treating the errors of your neighbour with that tenderness and lenity, with which you would be
glad

glad to have your own follies handled, you will gain him to Christ, and thus complete the most honourable of all conquests.

And be not here imposed upon, my friends, You, who for good and lawful reasons may be exempted from giving corporal alms, are not forthwith dispensed with from the spiritual works of charity, that I am treating of. You have met with losses, you are burthened with children, you have scarcely wherewithal to support yourselves. This is too true, I know, with respect to many; and, in regard to such, it must be granted that the injunction of temporal alms is by no means binding. But, does your brother commit an atrocious deed before your face? do your children live in a state of open profligacy? In any case of this nature, the precept of correction reaches you. If you do not reprove them; if you neglect any measure requisite to reclaim them to their duty, you become culpable in the eye of God; who declares to you, by his Prophet, that he will *require their blood and their souls at your hands.* Ezech. iii, 18.

The principal impediment to any good effect in this matter, is that impatience, resentment and hatred too usually blend themselves with the office of fraternal correction. To render it available,
strive

strive to convince your brother that you have his good at heart, and are solely actuated by the desire of his welfare. For if charity be your guide, you will not fail to pursue the method, which Christ himself prescribes. You will admonish the guilty party in private, before you apply to his Superiours. *If he will not hear thee,* says St. Matthew, *take with thee one or two more.* Matt. xviii, 16. And if he still remains incorrigible; then, in the name of God, inform those, who may have it in their power to redress the evil. Instead of which, the order of heaven, in affairs of this nature, is in general totally subverted. Because people seek to indulge their animosity, and gratify their spleen; and in lieu of a spirit of charity, under the cloak of correction, conceal the foul and empoisoned shafts of rancour, malice, and revenge.

A similar prudence is required in the execution of the next in succession of these meritorious works. It is an office of mercy highly pleasing, no doubt, to God and beneficial to our neighbour, to give wholesome advice to such, as stand in need of it. But no little discretion will be requisite so to qualify and temper it, that it may produce the desired effect, and operate to a good purpose. Such was the conduct observed by the
Prophet

Prophet Nathan towards David, in making him acquainted with his crime ; a conduct, that to this day calls forth our admiration, and should serve us for a model. You see a neighbour plunging himself headlong into difficulties. That lawsuit, which he is intent upon, will be his ruin, and entail destruction on his distressed family : charity demands of you to dissuade him from it, if you can, and lay before him all it's consequences. You have long since apprehended that credulous young woman was likely to fall a victim to the artful promises of a man, without principles, without morals, without probity : in charity, represent to her the imminent danger, that threatens her, both as to her honour and salvation. You behold others at variance and enmity : be it your part to try to reconcile them, and to terminate the differences, which so long have disunited them, to the scandal perhaps of all, that know them. For having it in your power to do these good works, if you omit them, you become criminal in the sight of God, who exacts of you, as a duty, to direct your misguided brethren by your counsel.

But the matter does not stop here, dear Christians. There are many other good works, which you are called upon to practise, as occasion may offer. You must uphold, you must support, you must

must solace your neighbour in his distress. This truth St. Paul was desirous to instil into the Thessalonians, when he told them to *comfort one another*; and *we beseech you brethren*, he adds, *rebuke the unquiet, comfort the feeble-minded, support the weak, and be patient towards all men.* 1 Thess. v. 11. He expresses to the Colossians the affection, he had for those, whom he had never seen; how he longed to *console, and instruct them in charity.* Your neighbour is devoured by grief and melancholy; he is a prey to the most corroding anguish of either mind or body; sustain him, encourage him in his afflictions, strengthen him under his trials, by opening to his view the prospect of the rewards, promised to them, that persevere. Do not contradict him, like the friends of Job, those proverbial comforters; who, instead of alleviating, only served to aggravate his misery.

Is your brother in affliction then? Be not insensible to him, says the Apostle, since you are members of the same body; and when one member suffers, all should sympathize. Wipe away his tears, rouse his despondency, and strive to render easy to him, by a charitable conduct, all the difficulties he may experience in the pursuit of virtue. Exact not of him, who, perhaps, is but a novice in the duties of religion, what you might expect
from

from one more conversant in it's trammels. In fine, let your consolations be mutual, in this vale of tears, in which the occasions of suffering are daily shooting up. Follow the advice of the Holy Ghost, who tells you to *insult no one, whose soul is in bitterness; for there is a God, who beholds all things; and he it is that exalteth.* Eccclus. vii, 12. *Be not wanting therefore in comforting them, that weep; and walk with them, that mourn;* id. nor fail to mitigate their sorrows by the unction of your words, and by the delicacy and kindness of your behaviour.

Such is the advice, which St. Paul inculcates on the Galatians, in order to make them children, worthy of the common parent Jesus Christ. *Bear ye one another's burthens: so you shall fulfil the law of Christ.* Gal. vi, 2. And such, my friends, must our comportment be in the different departments and occurrences of life. Some or other of you men present, who are engaged in the matrimonial state, may perhaps have a wife, that is froward, passionate, or a bad manager: let your mildness reclaim her, and make her sensible of the injury, she does your family, by the irregularity of her conduct. And among you married women, there may possibly be one or more, that is tied to a drunken, choleric, reprobate husband: endeavour like

like St. Monica, to reform him by your kindness. Never reprove him when he is in a passion, or in liquor; but wait patiently for the return of his reason: and even then, as much as possible, shun every subject, that may carry with it a probability of inflaming him.

True charity is insinuating, and strives to win the affections of those, whom it desires to lead to virtue; ever studious not to hurt their feelings by hastiness or acrimony. Yes, dear people, a Christian, sincerely actuated by the spirit of charity, although he will in no degree relax from the rules of the gospel, endeavours to render them amiable: and directing his attention to the heart of those, whom he wishes to draw to Christ, gains them over like the great Apostle; who, by every artifice of an industrious zeal, triumphed sometimes by his patience, and sometimes by his condescension; becoming all to all, as he himself says, that he might *save all*. He declares to the Corinthians that he labours only for their sakes; that they engross his affections, and that he bears them in his mind incessantly. Be convinced then, Christians, that unless you gain the heart, your endeavours will be fruitless. Imitate the conduct of the Deity, who, when he pleases to convert a sinner, holds out to him every attraction, that may engage his love

love. If your zeal be bitter, it will be barren also. If at the bottom there be a spirit of contention, glory not, says St. James, in your wisdom; for *this is not a wisdom descending from above; but earthly, sensual, and diabolical.* James iii, 15.

Finally, the last, and at the same time the best method, I shall mention of exercising your charity towards your brethren, and to effect their salvation, is to give them good example. This is a work of mercy, which, whilst it is the most universal in it's extent, is also the most efficacious in it's operations. For this reason St. Paul recommends to the Romans so pressingly to do good, not only before God, but also in the sight of men. With this point, brethren, I shall conclude: and as it is a matter so momentous, let me here entreat you to redouble your attention. It is not sufficient then that a Christian be guiltless in the sight of God; he must moreover be justified in the eyes of men, according to the Apostle. It will not suffice to be irreproachable at the bar of the Divinity; we must likewise be uncensurable at the tribunal of mankind, to whom the duty of edification and good example is at all times owing. For which reason charity obliges you, first

Never to do any thing evil, any thing prohibited by the laws of either God or man in the presence of

of your neighbour; otherwise you become murderers; you destroy those souls, for which their and your Redeemer shed the last drop of his sacred blood. *Through thy knowledge*, St. Paul says, *shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died.* Cor. viii, 11. At your hands will the Lord demand the souls of these unhappy victims to your scandal.

Secondly, to avoid giving them any occasion of offence, by the open commission of sin, is not sufficient. Here again, my brethren, you must follow the advice of St. Paul to the Thessalonians. *From all appearance of evil refrain yourselves.* 1. Thess. v, 22. You are known, for instance, to frequent the company of a person in the neighbourhood: your connexion may possibly be innocent: still, if it affords a plea to unfavourable judgments, you must break it off. For you are bound not only to abstain from evil, but *from all appearance* of it. The freedom of your conversation, and the levity of your carriage bring your virtue under suspicion. You must be more reserved in your words, more guarded in your behaviour; otherwise you may give occasion to sin, of which a Christian should avoid the *very appearance*. Your tepidity in the concerns of salvation, your remissness in the time of public prayer, that heedless air, you bring with you to the celebration of the divine mysteries and
instruc-

instructions; these, and many things similar diminish your neighbour's ardour, and tend manifestly to warp him. Whatever be the fault therefore correct it. For a Christian is bound to watch over all his actions with such attention, as may preclude even the semblance of harm; *from all appearance of evil refrain yourselves.*

I go still further, my friends, and assert that you are not only obligated to refrain *from all appearance of evil*; but that you are bound to give up many things, which in themselves are indifferent and allowable, if they prove a stumbling block to your neighbour; according to that rule of the Apostle; *All things are lawful for me, but all things do not edify.* 1 Cor. x, 23.

Nay, even good works themselves; but comprehend me rightly, Christians; (such works I mean as are usually styled works of supererogation, and which are not of precept) are sometimes to be omitted on the supposition I here speak of; that is to say, if the performance of them be attended with scandal to your neighbour. For charity is uniformly edifying, and so likewise should be the whole tenour of our actions; as St. Paul again testifies, when he says, *let all things be done for edification.* 1 Cor. xiv, 26. For example, you are censured for what may appear very laudable in

itself; I mean for spending a great part of your time in prayer, while your children are neglected, and your work left undone. In this case, let me advise you to attend to the business of your station, and to regulate your devotions suitably. But take notice, brethren; if the observance of the duties of *obligation*, such as being present at the divine service on Sundays and Holidays, frequenting the sacraments, sending your children to catechism &c, if the observance, I say, of these obligatory duties be a subject of scandal to any one, such a censure would only deserve to be disregarded; since it would be an offence unjustly taken; a scandal similar to that of the Scribes and Pharisees, who misconstrued every action of our Redeemer, howsoever warranted.

In short, my dear people, charity calls upon you to give your neighbour a personal example of all virtues; to supply him with a model in your conversation, and in your conduct. *Be an example to the faithful*, says St. Paul, *and let your modesty be known to all men; for the Lord is nigh.* Phil. iv, 5. There is no quality so amiable, none so edifying, and which so powerfully stimulates to good, as this of modesty, the genuine offspring of charity and benevolence. For as the former of these sublime virtues directs the sentiments of the mind, and the
affections

affections of the heart ; so the latter cannot fail to be productive of a like effect upon our words, our actions and our whole exterior. Modesty originates in a certain goodness of disposition, which willingly yields, and waves it's right in favour of it's neighbour ; it bears a great deal, without transgressing the limits of equity and moderation ; and retrenches from it's actions and from it's sentiments every-thing improper, every-thing that may have a tendency to wound, or hurt it's fellow-creatures. Henceforth then, my friends, conduct yourselves as beings formed to the image of the most High. As members of Jesus Christ, be influenced by his spirit. As children of God, walk on steadily in the path of righteousness. After the example of St. Paul, turn every stone, put every method in execution, and spare nothing to gain souls to the service of the Deity. Should you be so happy as to make although but one sole conquest for him, by the works of mercy, that I have been recommending, you may hope to find hereafter a powerful friend to introduce you into the eternal tabernacles. Amen.

T H E

SEVENTH SUNDAY after PENTECOST.

On HELL.

EVERY TREE, THAT BRINGETH NOT FORTH GOOD FRUIT, SHALL BE CUT DOWN, AND CAST INTO THE FIRE. Matt. vii, 19.

SUCH, brethren, is the declaration of unerring truth, a declaration, that I mean to expatiate on, for your entertainment to day; and if I design to alarm you, it is not to cast you into despair, but to contribute my best endeavours towards the work of your conversion. *Every tree, says Christ, that bringeth not forth good fruit, shall be cut down, and cast into the fire.*

Alas!

Alas ! my friends, have you ever weighed maturely the grievousness of the punishment, with which God threatens wicked Christians, represented by the trees here mentioned ? They *shall be cast into the fire*. But oh ! what a fire ! a fire, the serious view of which has struck terror into the most hardened, and brought back the most abandoned to the path of virtue.

To frame some idea, (although no human conception is able to form a just one) of the punishments of hell, figure to yourselves a vast and immensely deep cavity, filled with fire, with inflamed and glowing brimstone ; which the Apocalypse terms *the bottomless pit*. In these abodes of horror, in this land of malediction is the sinner's final residence. Here the Deity, intent on vengeance, pours in liquid streams of *burning pitch* and sulphur. Here the wicked are fastened down with *chains of fire* ; whilst the spirit of terror howls around them. Ah ! Christians, how tremendous a thing it is to fall into the hands of this avenging God ! Let us descend to day, in spirit, into these mansions of endless wo. Now is the time to do it with profit. Let us view the greatness of the peril, that we hitherto have been, and still are exposed to, and ascend gradually to the knowledge of the various torments of this

seat of retribution. These I now propose to lay before you, by the help of that celestial grace, whose benign influence we will here solicit.

In beginning it, my brethren, I must confess that I can give you but a very faint idea of the melancholy subject now before us. But however short my endeavours may fall, I will do my best to delineate to you the wretched condition of the damned in hell.

And first, they are separated from whatsoever had once been dear to them. Represent to yourselves a person, such as described by the gospel, (who has but to command, and who to good living adds every pleasure his heart can suggest) on a sudden cited by death, without having had time to arrange his accounts; he is tried, condemned and plunged into the abyss of hell. What a dreadful calamity! For observe, Christians, the dispositions, death shall find us in, are never to be altered. If we be so unhappy as to die in a state of impenitence, we must continue impenitent throughout eternity; i. e. bound with the very fetters, that shall have linked us so inseparably to the world. Conceive then, if you are able, the distress of such a soul, on seeing itself suddenly torn from all the attachments it had in life. A separation so much the more painful, as it looses

sight

fight for ever of what it was desirous to possess eternally : an universal separation, in which it is divorced from every creature. Ushered into this land of darkness, it finds nothing but it's sins, and their just punishment.

Oh ! dismal condition of the sinner ! and what must add to his misery is that he cannot obliterate this separation from his mind. In our present state, the deepest impressions wear away : time effaces every thing. But in hell there is no time : it's griefs are without cure : insomuch, my friends, that whoever shall die under the guilt of any vitious inclination, shall regret for all eternity the loss of his empty pleasures. He shall exclaim incessantly with the impious Agag ; it is thus, O bitter death ! thou dost cut me off from all I loved ?

But here, dear people, follows a second torment. Carry your thoughts as far as they can reach ; and still I will be bold to say, that you are unequal to comprehend the misfortune of a soul, that has lost her God. Nay, I will venture to affirm, that were we able to conceive how great an evil the loss of God is, we should be as wretched as the damned themselves ; since they alone, who experience it, can know it thoroughly. Fatal necessity ! cries out St. Cyril, to be deprived of the

Sove-

Sovereign good, from whom every happiness must flow. This is a loss without remedy, a separation without hope.

And herein chiefly consists the grievousness of this punishment. Judge of it by a comparison, St. Paul, about to quit the Milesians, thus addresses himself to them. My beloved children! to whom I have so often announced the mysteries of Christ, I must bid you farewell; the time is come, in which you must take your leave of Paul, your father, your friend, your teacher. *I know you shall see my face no more.* Acts. xx, 25. At these words, says the holy penman, the sorrow was general; every heart sobbed, every eye shed tears; while *falling on his neck, they kissed him.* ib. 37. Their eager looks shewed their wish to detain the vessel, that waited for him; and their dejected silence expressed their grief *for the word which he had said, that they should see his face no more.* ib. 38.

Now, do you think, my brethren, that if the Christians of Miletus thus bewailed the absence of Paul, the reprobate will not be inconsolable for the loss of their God? For after all, the former had the prospect of again meeting their friend in glory: whilst the latter are conscious that every shadow of hope is vanished. When the Almighty Judge shall

shall have pronounced those decisive words, I am no longer your God, nor you my people, *you shall not see my face*, Gen. xliii, 5. no power shall reverse them. In vain shall these unhappy wretches call out, *shew us thy face, O Lord!* and we shall be satisfied. No other answer to their cries, but that thunder, with which hell shall eternally resound, *depart from me ye cursed.*

At present, we are but little apprehensive of this eternal privation of the Sovereign good. We hear it spoke of without concern. But when the obscurity of faith shall be removed; when the wicked shall see God distinctly in all his majesty; shall perceive that he is the centre of every thing desirable; and shall behold themselves deprived of this God, and all imaginable good with him; who shall express, or even comprehend the least part of their grief? Unfortunate sinner! how bitter will be thy anguish when, in spite of thyself, thou shalt see that, whatever can render the possession of thy God infinitely to be wished for, is taken from thee, and that thou shalt have no other knowledge of the Deity, than what may serve to make thee rue his loss? Oh direful calamity! a calamity so much the more insupportable, as thou shalt be forced to confess thyself to be the sole author of thy own damnation.

This

This punishment the reprobate shall feel the more severely, as they shall compare the immense happiness, they are now deprived of, with the fading pleasures, they once enjoyed. Hence the involuntary recollection of their past iniquities, that shall force itself upon them. In this world, what a pile of sins do we every day accumulate. Tell the truth, my friends; what oaths! what obscenities! what sacrileges! and if you have been ignorant of it hitherto, be informed at least now that all these things are stored up in the treasury of God's wrath. Such then is the sad cause of the sinner's desolation; the clear and distinct view of his offences, and the reproaches, which his conscience makes him on their head. During his life, he would not give himself the trouble to look into his interior, but turned his eyes from his most glaring crimes. In hell however, *the wicked shall see*; he shall behold his abominations rising up against him, and reminding him perpetually of his ingratitude: *he shall see* the blindness of his understanding, the obduracy of his heart; he shall see the infidel and the idolater converted, and substituted in his stead in Abraham's bosom; whilst he, who had a special right to the inheritance of bliss, shall be cast into exterior darkness,

Oh!

Oh sight! what a source of sorrow shalt thou be to him! - *The wicked shall see, and shall be angry; he shall gnash his teeth and pine away.* Ps. cxi, 10. Hence his rage and despair; his outrageous blasphemies against God and his imprecations on himself. Still there might appear a glimpse of comfort, could he say he had not brought this distress upon his own head. But, what a cutting reflection to perceive, beyond a doubt, that he has plunged himself voluntarily, and with the fullest deliberation, into the gulph where he is now tormented? It is thou, wretched sinner! shall he say, that hast brought thyself to this horrid pass. Thy God wished to save thee, *and thou wouldst not*: for a momentary gratification thou chosest rather to perish, than ensure to thyself the never-ending possession of the greatest of all blessings. Oh inexhaustible fund of despair!

But what, dear people, shall we think, if, carrying our eyes yet further, we take a view of the devouring fire of this sulphurated furnace? Open your gates, ye dreary dungeons! and you, unhappy victims! come forth and shew yourselves. But no; you must remain where you are, environed with the merciless flames yourselves have kindled; your state is unalterable. What is it I behold however in this place of wo? Can I speak, or
you

you, Christians, hear it without horror? Millions of the human race bound fast with chains of fire; of a fire, that acts on the mind, as on the body; a fire, that burns without consuming; a fire, that, by the omnipotence of an avenging Deity, preserves the criminals, it punishes; a fire, that pierces into the inmost souls of the reprobate, to make them suffer the most excruciating torments, the provoked justice of a God can heap upon them.

Represent to yourselves the ardent flames, that heretofore devoured those execrable towns, Sodom and Gomorrha. Figure the glowing furnaces of Babylon, whose impetuous blaze struck the beholders with amazement. This, and every thing of the kind, is but a faint image of the fire of hell. For know, my brethren, was the fire of hell like that, we see on earth, this *burning pool*, as the Scripture terms it, might be deemed a place of comfort, in comparison with what it is in effect. Our fire falls of by degrees, or at least soon consumes whatever it is applied to: the fire of hell, besides being inextinguishable, has the quality to preserve those it burns; whence in the language of the sacred text, they *shall be salted with fire*. Our fire is luminous, and beautiful to the eye; that of hell black and obscure, increasing the gloom, instead of dissipating it. Our fire causes

but

but a partial pain; that of hell occasions to each part of the body at once every misery, of which it is susceptible. In fine, our fire is a grant of God's bounty; but the fire of hell is the terrible effect of his enraged justice; the tremendous instrument of his wrath and vengeance. From all this, my friends, what can I infer? but that you do not reflect on hell as you ought; for surely no one can think of the fire of hell seriously, and at the same time yield to sin.

But there are still other torments in reserve for the reprobate, among which the felicity of the elect is not the least. Ah! what an aggravation of their despair to behold the virtuous at the summit of happiness, while they themselves are reduced to the lowest ebb of misery? Witness the rich man mentioned in St. Luke, ch. 16. who, *lifting up his eyes*, sees the indigent Lazarus, that a little while before had begged at his gate. But where does he see him? *In the bosom of Abraham*. He sees but little: but he sees enough to become a prey to the most corroding envy. He suffers as much from the sight of heaven and its delights, as from the fire of hell with its dreadful tortures. The like shall be the fate of all the damned. The bliss of the Saints shall augment their misery.

Those

Those are they, will they say, whose edifying lives *we fools esteemed madness*. Wis. v, iii. There they are, in those mansions of delight and happiness. If, instead of following the dictates of corrupt nature, we had obeyed the gospel and its ministers, like them we might have now been happy in the inheritance of God's children. Oh paradise ! whose true value we know too late, shall we never then possess thee ?

To this gloomy regret, brethren, add their horrible maledictions and enormous blasphemies. For no sooner shall their eyes be opened to what they have lost, than they shall burst into the most severe reproaches against the authors of their damnation. Ye parents ! who occasion your childrens ruin by your bad example or neglect, expect to hear these same children load you with the most shocking imprecations. Ye sensualists ! whose only study is to corrupt innocence, and who, to gain your ends, are now so lavish of fine speeches, expect to find in hell those tender protestations turned into expressions of abhorrence.

In short, Christians, what shall I say to give you at least some idea of the state of the damned sinner ? He is a victim, destined to feel, without ceasing, the vengeful arm of an implacable Deity : he is a wretch universally abhorred, on whom

all

all nature declares war: he is a criminal, whose sole resource is despair; an useless despair, that can only tend to complete his misery. No, dear friends; no description can be equal to the severity of his dreadful fate. Hell, says Tertullian, is a collection of all the torments, that the fury of an insulted God can inflict. It is the seal, so to speak, of God's wrath, the complement of his vengeance. And of what continuance is it to be? For an eternity. This is the last, and I may add, the most tremendous of all it's terrors.

Here, merciful God! who at present dost compassionate our failings, as a tender parent; but who ere long wilt treat us with so much rigour, as an inexorable judge; for the conversion both of the pastor and the flock, enable me to paint the eternity of thy vengeance in those strong colours, that have frequently been productive of the most happy changes. But what am I soliciting? Reason in this matter is useless. Eternity of sufferings! immensity of ages! duration without end! who shall comprehend thee?

In fact, dear people, the imagination is here bewildered. We may say of eternity, as of God; that it is better understood from a description of what it is not, than of what it is. What then is this eternity, which we have so much cause to dread?

dread? Is it a circle, as the antients represented it? But a circle, replies St. Basil, has both a beginning and an end; whereas eternity has neither. Is it a vast assemblage of ages, succeeding one another? But in any number of ages, how multiplied soever, there is always a something past, and a something to come; whereas in eternity, says St. Augustin, there is no past, no future, but every thing is present. Is it the sum of all possible duration? but eternity has no limits. What then again is this dreadful eternity? I answer with St. Augustin; carry your thoughts of it as high as you can, and you will still fall short of it's reality.

However, Christians, to give you an imperfect idea of it, figure to yourselves a mountain as big as the whole world: was the smallest pebble taken from it at the close of every century, this enormous mass would be reduced to nothing, before eternity would commence. Imagine the whole earth covered with water as in the time of the deluge: was a single drop dried up at the end of each million of years, this vast expanse of water would at last be drained; but eternity is inexhaustible. In fine, collect in your imagination all the grains of sand, which the earth and sea can furnish; double, multiply them as

long

long as you please : of this immensity of particles, innumerable as it is, God can single out the last ; but he is unable to discover the final moment of eternity.

To this eternity of sufferings, brethren, add an eternity of regret. To be miserable by necessity is a situation to be pitied : but to be miserable through our own fault, and only because we will be so, is a folly without example, except in the case of hell. Yet such is the condition of the reprobate. I might, he constantly repeats, have not been damned, and it is my own doing that I am. Would heaven have cost me more, than so many others, of whose happiness I have had a glimpse ? Ah ! had I made these reflections, when I was in a condition to profit by them ! Alas ! I made them ; I even foresaw what I should one day suffer, for not weighing them with attention. But having neglected to take advantage of them : I have nothing left but to regret it, and my regret must be eternal. O God ! what a cruel torment ! a torment, that will make those wretches feel all the consequences of their loss, all the calamities they have drawn upon themselves, in short whatever they endure from their obstinacy in sin.

Now tell me, Christians, do you believe the awful truths I have been setting before your eyes ?

Are you thoroughly convinced there is a hell to torment those sinners, of whom St. Paul says that they shall have no place in heaven? I mean the drunkard, the detracter, the libertine &c. Do you believe any thing yet further of this hell, which I have painted in such terrifying, though most defective colours? Do you believe, I say, that this hell is destined by the Supreme Being to punish a momentary crime, an instantaneous, but deliberate thought? Are you persuaded of it? Or do you not consider what the Ministers of Christ tell you of this place of torments as the effect of exaggeration? Once more, do you believe these dreadful truths, and not shudder with horror for your perilous situation? For what, my friends, would become of the greatest part of you, were you judged this very moment? What is become of all those, who have died before you in dispositions similar to your own at present? How many of your acquaintance, your friends, your relations are now burning in hell, precisely for having lived as you live? Let us go in spirit then into these subterraneous caverns: let us descend thither during life, says St. Bernard, that we may not be compelled to do it after death: let us lend an ear for a while
to

to the complaints of those unhappy souls. Hearken: what a dismal sound issues from the infernal pit? Redouble your attention, brethren.

Methinks I hear the voice of one of your accomplices in wickedness, addressing these words to you. Oh you, who are yet inhabitants of the earth! you, who are assembled within these walls, to be made acquainted with my woes! *attend, and see if there be sorrow like to mine.* Lament. i, 12. Listen; and from the frightful account I am about to give judge, if you are able, of the excess of my misery. The God of vengeance has struck me; he has bruised me; he has crushed me, as the vintager does his grapes, *in the day of his fierce anger.* Ib. He has enclosed me on every side with fire and flame; it pierces through my flesh, it reaches my soul: *from above he hath sent fire into my bones.* Ib. 13. I suffer without hopes or consolation; I neither have, nor ever shall have the least comfort under my pains; I am filled with rage, I am oppressed with despair: *he hath made me desolate, spent with sorrow all the day.* Ib. This God, so dreadful in his wrath, has put me into the power of a merciless enemy, who never will relent; of a powerful enemy, from whom I can never escape: *he hath delivered me into a hand, from which I am not able*

to rise. Ah! ye sinners, that hear me! learn wisdom at my expence; between you and the fire, in which I am burning, there is but a slender partition: nevertheless, you are at your ease, you laugh, you divert yourselves, you live as unconcernedly, as if hell was a mere fiction.

Let us avail ourselves of this advice, while yet we have time, my brethren. Oh! that I could impress upon you indelibly this thought of eternity; a thought so salutary at present, but so much to be dreaded hereafter. That I could make the whole earth ring with that tremendous word, eternity, eternity. Ye sinners! men, who act as if you had no judgment, *be wise at last*, Ps. xciii, 8. and take counsel from the misfortune of others. Think of hell frequently, my dear friends; this thought will arm you against sin, will preserve you from falling into this abyss of wo, and will infensibly conduct you to those mansions of felicity, to which I entreat the infinite goodness of our God to lead you. Amen.

T H E

EIGHTH SUNDAY after PENTECOST.

On the particular Judgment of the Hour of Death.

GIVE AN ACCOUNT OF THY STEWARDSHIP, FOR
NOW THOU CANST BE STEWARD NO LONGER.

LUKE, XVI, 2.

THE parable of the rich man and his steward, with which the gospel of this Sunday presents us, is so obviously applicable to the particular judgment of the soul, at the time of it's separation from the body, that the Son of God seems to have made it purposely to impress us with an idea of the rigorous trial, we must then be summoned to.

The rich man is no other than God himself, the sovereign Lord and owner of all things. The

steward is man, who holds of God not only every thing that he possesses in the line of grace, but whatever also he can possibly have any pretensions to in the order of nature: a steward oftentimes faithless and ungrateful; who too frequently misapplies, and wastes the goods intrusted to him; a steward who, at a certain hour, prefixed from all eternity, shall be cited to the tribunal of the divine justice, to answer for his administration. This hour is the hour of our dissolution; that period, in which the anxious soul, freed from it's prison of the flesh, shall wing it's flight into the regions of immortality; an hour most tremendous to the sinner; who, without delay, must be ushered into the presence of his injured Lord, and become responsible for his conduct.

I have already, brethren, had occasion to speak to you of the general judgment, or those solemn assizes, which, at the close of nature, shall bring together all the children of Adam, to receive their definitive sentence in the face of the universe. The judgment, I mean to treat of here, is called the particular judgment, to distinguish it from the one just mentioned. It is that examination, which each of us must undergo at the instant of our departure; and of which, according to the opinion of divines, we are to understand those words of St. Paul

Paul

Paul to the Hebrews, *It is appointed for men once to die, and after this the judgment.* Heb. 9. The subject therefore, is highly important, Christians. For which reason, let me entreat you to give it the attention it merits, so as to make it available to your welfare : and for this purpose we will begin it by imploring the aid of God's unerring Spirit.

Give an account of thy stewardship. The time, in which these awful words shall be addressed to each of us, dear people, is the moment of our death, when we *can be stewards no longer.* There have indeed been instances, in which the Deity, by a singular exertion of his justice, has thought proper to pass a more early and visible sentence on some notorious sinners, by way of example ; but, in general, it is usual with him to judge us only in an invisible manner, at the separation of the soul and body ; and at that instant is the prosecution opened, the accusations heard, and the sentence passed and executed. Oh tremendous moment ! Can I possibly lose sight of thee, which art to be the commencement of my everlasting happiness or misery ? Oh fatal moment, upon whose breath hangs an eternity ! How can I forget thee, without hazarding my ruin ? Or how can I recollect thee, without trembling with anxiety ?

anxiety? Let us think of it seriously, my friends, and employ every other moment with so much industry as not to lose one of them; since that single one may merit for us a felicity without end.

The time then of dissolution being come, the soul is instantly arraigned at this dreadful bar. What a matter of astonishment, to find itself on a sudden separated from all things visible, from the world, from company, from friends, from it's very body even, it's inseperable companion for so long a time! The only things it now beholds, of which it has any knowledge, are it's works, the just objects of it's terrour. What alarms from it's criminal conscience, which already accuses and condemns it! especially when it reflects that there is no way left to deprecate it's irritated judge; that it has let slip the time of appeasing him by repentance; and that every chance of rendering him propitious is now vanished. What anxiety, when it thinks of the importance of the matter to be decided! viz. it's eternal happiness or misery, of which it has every reason to apprehend the issue. It is now in vain, poor soul! to petition for delay; it is unavailable to regret the little precaution, thou hast used in this affair beforehand.

What

What shall I do, says Job, when God shall arise to judge? and when he shall examine, what shall I answer him? Job. xxxi, 14. Will he not tell us, brethren, that he had supplied us, throughout life, with all necessary graces? Or shall we seek excuses in the maxims and customs of the world? Has he not a thousand times informed us, by his oracles, that he has long since condemned them, and that such, as follow them, are already judged? What shall I do then? What will be my fate? This is what you ought to reflect upon in time; you, who live at your ease, wrapt up in the enjoyments of a transitory life. It will then be too late; all that shall remain, at that critical moment, will be to give an immediate account of your stewardship. But, oh! Christians, what an account is it, that shall be here demanded of us? An exact and most strict account, in which nothing can elude either the knowledge or the vengeance of our Judge; a severe and irrevocable account, of which the decision shall be definitive, the consequences eternal.

The bright light of this awful Legislator's countenance will discover to us, in an instant, all our iniquities. There, my brethren, we shall see at once all our sins of whatever kind; of thought, word, and deed; the neglect of our spiritual duties,

duties, the abuse of the sacraments, the profanation of days devoted to the Lord; there we shall behold the good, we might have done, but which unhappily we omitted; the precious time we squandered away; the sacred inspirations we contemned; such insincerity in our best actions, so much extravagance on pleasure and folly, whilst our hands were unmercifully shut against the poor.

Then, my friends, and not till then, shall we see things in their true colours: and alas! how altered shall our opinion of them be? What we had thought but a trifling censure of our neighbour, shall then appear a cruel injustice. What we had esteemed but mirth, and the sallies of good-humour, shall be treated as licentiousness, and irreligion. What our delicacy or interest had prevailed upon us to omit, shall be deemed a most criminal neglect. In a word, what we had flattered ourselves would be indifferent in the eyes of our Judge, we shall then find to be the just matter of his indignation.

But was I even authorized to think myself clear of all reproach; that my hands were pure, and my conscience white as the drifted snow; still, my God! I should not cease to have reason to tremble at the thought of this alarming hour. For thy eyes are very different from mine. Thou discernest faults, where I see merit. Thou findest dark.

darkness and obscurity, where I fancy all to be luminous and brilliant. My garments, i. e. my external actions, howsoever beautiful they may appear to me, are nevertheless my shame in thy presence, and so many objects of abhorrence.

With the rays of his infinite wisdom, to use the figurative expression of St. Paul, God will dissect all the powers of the soul, and expose to open day-light it's most perplex windings, it's most hidden recesses. Here, he will hold up the artifices of that double, dissembling, flattering spirit; it's disguise, it's malice, it's perfidy. There opening it's corrupt heart, what abominations shall he unveil? What impure ideas, what criminal intrigues, what envy, what vanity, what attachment to the world. Nothing so secret, that shall not then be manifested; *for all things are naked, and open to his eyes*, Heb. iv. 13. Behold, will God say, that bitter and rooted hatred, the cause of so much scandal; this profane love, which so long preyed on that carnal man; those sensual desires; that more than brutal intemperance, which for such a space of time tyrannized over him; that tongue, envenomed with gall and rancour, and distended with the poison of lasciviousness and obscenity.

Figure

Figure to yourselves at present, Christians, the distress of your then condition. What excuses will you resort to? But let me tell you, there will be no excuses for you; all things must there appear unmasked, and in their genuine colours. What will your reflections be, when you shall see yourselves surrounded with the light of God, which will place your whole life in open view? Behold there all your thoughts, all your words, all your actions. The fading glory, the perishable pleasures of the world are passed in your regard; but the sins, the numerous sins, they have occasioned you to fall into, are here still with you.

Human justice takes cognizance of such crimes only, as disturb society, and break in upon it's rules; every thing else remains unnoticed. But at the tribunal of the Deity, my brethren, we must give an account of each single word; a word perhaps, whose sole malice consists in what the gospel terms idle: how much more of loose discourse, of swearing, of defamation &c? The present is the time of mercy; the future that of justice. Now, as in this life, in which lenity presides, there is no sin so enormous, as to exclude God's forgiveness; so, after death, when justice shall resume it's rights, there will be no offence so

trifling

trifling, as not to attract a proportionate resentment from him.

When the sentence of this Sovereign Judge shall have branded such among our sins, as shall be capital and mortal, will this, think you, be sufficient, brethren? I should be happy, Christians, could I, by repeatedly inculcating it, impress this truth so forcibly, upon you, that nothing might efface it. No transgression, however unimportant in our ideas, will then be overlooked. As many neglects of duty, as you shall be found guilty of; neglects, I say, so frequent and so disregarded; so many subjects of condemnation. The malice of man is inexhaustible; nor is the source of the divine justice less unfathomable.

The human conscience may be compared to a shut up book, in which the syllables and letters, that form the contents of it, are blended and intermixed. But when the Almighty hand shall unfold this confused volume, we shall there read distinctly the whole history of our lives; of which every passage shall appear marked in such strong and lively colours, that it will not be possible to mistake them.

We are prevented at present from knowing ourselves, and listening to the voice of reason, by the tumult of our passions, and by such external
objects

objects, as our senses throw before us; by lying impostures I mean, by delusive flatteries and, above all, by the tainted air of a dissipated and corrupted world. But at this great trial, all such hindrances shall be done away. The enchanting figure of the world shall be passed; and death shall have absorbed our passions, and cut us off from the herd of sycophants, that beset us. Deserted by every creature, we shall be left entirely to ourselves. When, behold! instead of those pleasing and interested deceptions, that so long imposed upon us, we shall be taught such unwelcome truths, as we were studiously industrious to shut our eyes to; and, in lieu of the imaginary perfections, which our fancy bestowed upon us so liberally, we shall find real and most gross defects.

Give an account, will the Lord moreover say, of the many acts of wickedness you have occasioned; of the many souls, you have murdered by your bad example; of the many sins, you have committed in others, by your pernicious maxims, by your inconsiderateness, by your levity; of those children, those servants, who have been ruined by your inattention to instruct them. Must you needs act the part of the Devil, and destroy those souls, I shed my blood to save?

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We are here, dear friends, in the habit of making light of sins of omission ; as if the Son of God had not assured us that *the tree, that beareth not fruit, shall be cut down and cast into the fire* ; or as if we might live in our state of life, whatsoever it be, unconcerned in respect to it's obligations. We think riches well acquired, if obtained without a manifest injustice ; pleasures lawful, if not carried to excess ; in a word, to do no harm seems the summit of perfection ; to steer clear of immorality the height of godliness.

But oh ! dear people, how different will our ideas be at this impartial and decisive period ? When we shall find ourselves responsible no less for the omission of virtue, than for the perpetration of vice.

However, I have done many good works, will some one say : In these I will intrench myself ; on these I will boldly rest the hopes of my salvation. But be not too confident, presumptuous Christian ! whosoever thou art. For let us examine, will God say, these pretended virtues ; let us separate and distinguish whatever there is in them laudable, from what is not so. What were their principles and motives ? Was it not caprice, constraint, or vanity ? Was it not to draw the eyes of men upon you ? to effect your purposes in a more refined
and

and artful manner? Is it being virtuous to be good from humour, zealous from passion, temperate from avarice, humble from imbecility, or an enemy to the world from disgust? Is it religion to observe the commands of God, with a view to please men? to seek for virtue, in order to find a fortune? When these, Christians, and every like motive shall be lopped off, what will there be left of that spreading tree of virtue, under which you hope to shelter yourselves?

But supposing our intentions in all respects admissible and upright, still we shall have but too much cause to apprehend that our repentance may have been sterile, our penitential endeavours unsatisfactory, our compliance with the relative duties of our station incomplete? What assurance have we that the Sovereign Judge, after weighing all things in the balance of the sanctuary, will not say to us, as to the Bishop of Sardis in the Apocalypse, *I find not thy works full.* Apoc. 3. Let this, my brethren, caution us to dread lest our best works be found unworthy to appear in the sight of God: and lest that fatal sentence, *thou art found too light*, Dan. v, which involved the ruin of Balthazer, should likewise blast the hopes of our presuming confidence.

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In fine, my friends, to sum up all in short, where is the man, who, reflecting on the transactions of his life, can affirm that he has past so much as a day without infringing the laws of his Creator? Let us but throw into one pile the sins that strike our eyes, and the sins that escape our sight; the sins that give scandal to the world, and the sins the world applauds and honours with the name of virtue; the sins of youth, which, hurried on by passion, hears neither reason, duty, nor religion; and the sins of a more advanced age, which makes no other use of reason, than to offend with greater obstinacy; the sins of malice, and the sins of ignorance; the sins of abuse and the sins of neglect; the sins against the general duties of Christianity, and the sins against the particular obligations of our state; the sins we are forced to condemn, in spite of ourselves, and the sins we would willingly gloss over, because we are not disposed to correct them. To our own offences let us add the crimes we have occasioned in our neighbour: ever keeping in view the following maxims; first, that, although sin appears not outwardly, it is nevertheless consummated in a moment in the corruption of the heart; secondly, that the omission of our respective duties is no less criminal, than the positive transgression of God's

law; and lastly, that complaisance, custom, and human respects are but vain excuses, to which not the smallest attention will be paid at the divine tribunal. All these things, I say, maturely weighed, can we be surprised that the Royal Prophet should entreat the Lord not to *enter into judgment with his servant*; or that he adds that, *in his sight, no one living shall be justified*? Ps. cxlii, 2.

To us then, Christians, are those words most applicable, which Pilate addressed to our Saviour, when at his bar; *Behold in how many things they accuse thee*: Mark xv, 4. for, at that time, Christ was the representative of us, and held the place of sinners.

Behold then, I say, that the judgment, I have been speaking of, is not so distant as you may have imagined. Perchance, you supposed it might have been deferred till the consummation of the world; but you see that it may possibly arrive before the conclusion of this year, of this month or of this week even.

Behold therefore again, my friends, and view your folly. For who will dare to offend, that does but seriously reflect, that in a short space of time, perhaps the very moment after his sin he may be arraigned at the tribunal of a judge, infinitely wise, whom nothing can escape; infinitely

nitely just, whose decision must be equitable ; infinitely powerful, to whom all resistance would be nugatory ; of a judge in fine, the Sovereign Legislator of mankind ; who, as he has given them the code of his sacred laws, will try them by the same unerring rules ; and, according to their deserts, pass sentence on each of misery or happiness everlasting.

Oh deplorable condition of the sinner ! who, charged with so many crimes, and conscious of such foul ingratitude ; between two eternities, between heaven and hell ; uncertain, anxious, trembling awaits his doom.

Behold in how many things they accuse thee ; what wilt thou say, unhappy wretch ! when thou shalt be compelled to open thy eyes, which hitherto thou hast kept shut ; and when, in spite of thyself, thou shalt read the sentence of thy condemnation, indicted by the hand of the Deity ; a sentence, that will harrow up thy soul, more cruelly than the fire of hell itself.

That none of you, my dear people, may be reduced to this dreadful state, ever have this awful judgment before your eyes : think of it often, and above all, think of it, I beseech you, attentively. Nothing, but the want of thought, has brought the person, I am here describing, into such

extremities of misery ; and be assured that the like want of serious consideration will plunge you also into similar distress. To prevent it therefore, accompany the sinner frequently to his trial, and take a view of it's fatal issue. See the shock of this miserable soul, on finding itself destined by it's severe, but just judge, to the abodes of endless woe : mark it's dread, at the opening of those tremendous gates, which ever after shall be closed upon it ; and take your lesson from it's unutterable horror, at the sight of those devouring and inextinguishable flames, into which it is about to step.

Were we truly penetrated with the fear of God's judgments, Christians, and thoroughly sensible of that rigorous account, which we shall soon be called upon to render of our stewardship, there is nothing we should not do, nothing we should not submit to, that might in any way contribute to ease us of the oppressive burthen of our sins. We are all of us, alas ! indebted to the divine justice, ten thousand talents, i. e. an immense debt, which we have contracted by our offences : nor have we any remedy, but to implore the patience, and, if possible, avert the anger of our offended Lord, by works of penance. These, I confess, are displeasing to nature. But since, my brethren, we have no other resource left, can we be
unwil-

unwilling to resort to these, which are the only means left to prepare for the solemn trial, that is ere long to decide our destiny? Nor let any one despair, of finding mercy, while in life, howsoever numerous his crimes may be; since he will have for his judge the same God, as was pleased to come into the world for no other purpose than *to save sinners*, and whose ardent wish is still to bring the lost sheep back to his fold. Be but truly penitent, my dear friends; have but recourse to him, in the manner he himself prescribes; make an impartial examination of your souls beforehand; confess at the tribunal of penance everything, you may be apprehensive of being reproached with at his bar; cast yourself at the feet of his ministers; speak to them without disguise, and shew your sincerity by the amendment of your lives; and all will still be well with you. Your conversion will then become a subject of joy to the celestial court; and a source of unspeakable and never ending happiness to yourselves, which I devoutly entreat may be the portion of you all. Amen.

T H E

NINTH SUNDAY after PENTECOST.

On the Remorse of Conscience.

IF THOU HADST KNOWN THE THINGS THAT ARE
TO THY PEACE. LUKE XIX, 42.

THE subversion of Jerusalem, which our Saviour here foretells, and which was accomplished soon after, may abundantly evince how fatal a thing it is to be insensible to the calls of heaven. Had the Jews but been industrious to come at the knowledge of him, who *stood in the midst of them*, they might have prevented their destruction. Nor have we, Christians, any other means to ward off the impending blow, than

than by endeavouring to acquire a true knowledge of our interior. But how shall we obtain it? By attending to our conscience, brethren. This will tell us that, of ourselves, we are nothing but weakness and sin: that if we are in possession of any good, it is derived from our Creator, and is the gift of his free bounty: that it is true he has favoured us with many graces, which are daily increasing; but that our sins at least keep pace with them; and that these are the two things the most remarkable in our lives; first, that our sinfulness has not prevented God from loving us tenderly, nor from heaping his blessings on us; and secondly, that such repeated benefactions have not diminished our ingratitude: that still we daily resist the inspirations of his grace, and are deaf to the cries of conscience, which reproaches us with our misconduct. This latter point I here intend to elucidate for your instruction; proving to you first, that God never acts more favourably by you, than when he urges you by the remorse of conscience; and secondly, that you never injure him more sensibly, than when you turn a deaf ear to it's reproaches. These two reflections will, I hope, suffice to discover the mercy of your God, on the one hand, and your own ingratitude, on the other. But
 this

this he alone can effect, whose aid duty calls upon us to solicit in the first place.

To convince you, my friends, that God never gives you a stronger proof of his love, than when, in the midst of your iniquities, he checks you by the remorse of conscience, it suffices to lay it down as a principle that these internal reproaches, which you endeavour to smother, are in fact so many graces; and on this head let us make a few reflections.

And first, dear people, remark that the importunities of conscience, which you experience when so unhappy as to offend God, are graces, that he bestows on you in order to reclaim you. This has always been his conduct in regard to such sinners, as he was desirous to bring back to virtue. He strews their road with thorns, he imbitters all their pleasures, he reproaches them with their crimes incessantly, by the ministry of conscience. Whenever therefore, after the commission of any sin, you feel yourselves uneasy, it is God himself that makes you so. When thou wert solicitous, he says, to hide thy iniquity from thyself, *thou thoughtest that I should be like to thee*; Ps. xlix, 20. But thou wert mistaken; *I will reprove thee, and set thy abominations before thy face*. ib. But why does the omnipotent Being thus pursue

pursue you? Because he loves you, Christians. *Such as I love*, he says, *I rebuke and chastise*. Apoc. iii, 19. Must we not acknowledge then that the reproaches of conscience, which succeed to sin, are graces, that dispose us to conversion? Internal not external graces; since they are formed within us, in the recesses of our souls: whence St. Paul says that *God hath sent the spirit of his Son into our hearts*, to cry out against our wickedness. Gal. iv, 6.

But here, my brethren, I go a step further, and assert that this interior remorse, which galls you, is the first grace God affords you, with a view to your conversion. When you offend him by a mortal sin, at that instant your soul is stript of all it's merit, deprived of it's claim to glory and of all pretensions to the assistance of heaven. As therefore, in this condition, you cannot make the least advance towards returning to him, what does God do? He anticipates you: but how? By making your conscience speak, to reproach you with your sin, and stimulate you to repentance. Behold a striking example, that will help you to comprehend this matter. David falls and, to conceal his crime, gives orders that the husband of the woman, he had sinned with, be exposed to imminent death. David, an adulterer, and an homicide, is perfectly
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at ease; nor does the Scripture insinuate that he shews any disposition to repent. The Lord, who looks upon him with the eye of mercy, begins by making him sensible of the stings of conscience. At the voice of the prophet Nathan, David exclaims, *I have sinned.* 2 Kings, xii, 13. Such is the power of conscience, which first convinced this criminal prince of his misconduct.

Nor imagine, Christians, that the Almighty Sovereign, whom you have offended, degrades his Majesty, by thus stooping, as I may say, to court you. No; in doing this he still supports his dignity. He recalls the sinner; but without impairing his authority. He makes the first advances; but he makes them as a King, as a Monarch, as a God. How so? By the very anxiety with which he fills him. For conscience, as the holy Job says, does not only disquiet the sinner in relation to the past and present: it not only reminds him of his lewdness, his injustice &c, but it moreover sets before him a dreadful futurity, and makes him feel beforehand all the torments, due to the long catalogue of his iniquities. He fancies he sees, on every side, flames that threaten him, and tortures that await him. Represent to yourselves a condemned criminal; he already undergoes his sentence, and for a single real death, endures a thou-

thousand imaginary ones, that are no less dreadful. A striking resemblance this of a sinner, arraigned by his own conscience. Sometimes he thinks himself at the bar of the Divinity, expecting the sentence of an inexorable judge; at other times precipitated into the bottomless pit. He is alive indeed, but his life is scarcely more desirable, than that of the reprobate in hell. Does not God then manifest the sovereignty of his power, by the punishments he inflicts, notwithstanding that he seeks to reclaim us?

Another great advantage of this remorse of conscience is that it is a fixed and permanent grace; a grace that God favours us with in spite of ourselves, and which we cannot throw off. Have you not frequently experienced the truth of this assertion, Christians? What, I ask, has been the result of your endeavours to stifle the thought of any crime, when it obtruded on your rest? Useless efforts. For you must allow that sin bears down upon the conscience with such a force, that with all its exertions, it cannot prevent being overpowered by it. We would willingly conceal it from our own heart. We should be glad, if possible to hinder ourselves from thinking we had done wrong, because this reflection disturbs our peace and shocks self-love: but in vain. The offence
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is ever uppermost, and we feel the condemnation which, in defiance of us, conscience pronounces on our guilt. Such is the particular effect of this grace, that, the more unworthy of it a man becomes, the closer it adheres to him. It enters in with sin, and scarcely ever quits the conscience, that delays to renounce it's habits.

Again, my friends; as this grace of remorse of conscience is the most lasting in it's duration, so it is the most universal in it's extent. It is a grace common to all. Not only the virtuous feel it's stings, as David after a sin of frailty and surprise; but such traitors as Judas, such deicides as the Jews, such fratricides as Cain; all without exception are open to it's attacks. *Tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man, that worketh evil.* Rom. ii, 9. What a consolation for you, my brethren; for those among you in particular, who perhaps for years have been bent double by the weight of your sins; who have formed to yourselves what the Apostle styles *a seared conscience*; 1 Tim. iv, 2; and who to impose upon your pastor, have come to the Confessional, with the same habits, the same determination to persevere in your crimes, and have insolently presented yourselves at the sacred table in these sentiments? What a consolation, I repeat, that you
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can say to yourselves; sinner as I am; a criminal, obstinate, sacrilegious sinner, I may yet hope; God has still a grace in store for me, as well as for the just?

Moreover, admire, Christians, that these alarms of conscience are sure graces, and which cannot mislead you. Because the devil, that *roaring lion*, who goeth about, seeking whom he may devour, 1 Pet. v, 8, cannot disguise, and transform himself, as the Scripture says, into an angel of light to deceive you. For it is certain that this spirit of darkness will never think of representing to a sinner the shame and scandal of his proceedings. On the contrary, he does his utmost to hide from him the foulness of his iniquities, to diminish their enormity, to efface their remembrance from his mind, and to prevent him from laying them at the feet of his Confessor. Be then assured, brethren, that whenever, after having offended God mortally, you feel this secret anguish, it is he himself who speaks to you, and that this salutary concern proceeds solely from his grace.

In fine, to conclude this first part, let us know that of all the heavenly graces, there is perhaps none that disposes the mind of man to repentance more effectually. For what can operate to this purpose with greater efficacy, than to be obliged
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to be our own accusers, as soon as we have sinned, and to be compelled to pronounce the sentence of condemnation on ourselves. I have fallen into the crime of impurity; I have injured my neighbour; I have received the sacraments without the requisite dispositions. I cannot deny but I am a sinner; my conscience tells me so; and it tells me still more; that I have a thousand times deserved hell; that without the mercy of God, which expects me to-day, but which perhaps may not do so to-morrow, I should be the unhappy victim of the devils. All this, dear Christians, is included in the reproaches, which this insuperable grace conveys. In courts of human judicature, the conviction of a criminal may be dubious; because the witnesses may be bribed off, or their evidence prove contradictory. Not so however in a troubled conscience. This is a witness not to be equalled; and which is so much the more formidable as it cannot be rejected, since it is always present; it cannot be called in question, since it is always sure; it cannot be won over, since it is always inexorable; it cannot be intimidated, since it is always free; it cannot be set aside, since it is always inseparable from the criminal; finally, it cannot be silenced:

it speaks, it cries out without ceasing, not to the ears, but to the heart.

Let us then enter into the sentiments of those repenting sinners, mentioned by Jeremy; who, being converted from their evil ways, attributed the happy change to the remorse, that haunted them, while they walked in the road of perdition. O God! said they, thou hast deceived us to our interest. When we revolted against thy law, and followed the bent of our inclinations, *we looked for peace, and no good came.* We sought a remedy to our misfortunes, and thou hast sent us trouble; *a time of healing, and behold fear.* Jer. viii, 15. Wherefore, O Lord! *we acknowledge our wickedness, for we have sinned against thee.* ib. xiv. 20. You have now beheld the advantages, that arise from the remorse of conscience, Christians; let us next see how great must be your ingratitude, if you be deaf to it's reproaches.

Since therefore this remorse is a grace, are you not highly culpable, if you refuse to listen to it? Yes; to shut your ears against it is to resist the Holy Ghost, as I will shew you by the recapitulation of what I have said already.

First, convinced, as you ought by this time to be, that the anxiety, which agitates your minds when you offend God, is a singular grace; should
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you not also be satisfied that, to bar the avenues of your heart against it, is resisting heaven, is being rebellious to the voice of the Holy Ghost, which speaks by that of your conscience? And may I not justly address those words to you, which St. Stephen did to the Jews? *Insensible men, uncircumcised hearts, you always resist the Holy Ghost.* Ac. vii, 51. But in what respect were the Jews to blame? In being deaf to that remorse of conscience, which reproached them, with not having known the promised Messiah, when he stood in the midst of them; with having opposed him, and his doctrine; with having persisted in their deicide, rather than confess, as St. Paul says, that they had crucified the author of life. Now, is not this, my brethren, exactly what you do when influenced by passion, you give into those excesses, that reflect disgrace upon us all? In vain does conscience tell you, such a thing is a sin, this injustice, that habit of swearing, that scandalous connexion &c. Insensible to it's admonitions, passion stifles the voice of conscience. Nothing checks you, and as headstrong as the Jews, you boldly resist the interior Monitor, which importunes you so incessantly.

But know; although the hearing of it should make you tremble; know, I say, that by reject-
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ing this first means of conversion, you in some sense reject all the treasures of God's mercy. Conscience once lulled, the heart becomes callous; and you live on undisturbed, because you hear but indistinctly this secret witness, that accuses you, this severe judge, that condemns you. After this, my friends, what further can you expect the Deity should attempt in order to reclaim you? Do you suppose, that he will favour you with any other grace? But can he do it, consistently with the regulations of his providence? For I have told you, in my first part, that the remorse of conscience is a grace altogether miraculous; inasmuch as it springs from sin itself. But will you not allow that the more miraculous it is in it's origin, the more culpable you become by resisting it? God displays the wonders of his mercy by giving you an antidote against your crime, in the crime itself. But you, by an inconceivable perverseness, render this grace abortive, and defeat his intentions; as if the malignity of your heart meant to insult his excessive bounty.

Nor is this all, brethren; the malice of the sinner, who is obstinately deaf to the voice of conscience, which presses him to return to God, includes an attempt to revolt against his Supreme

Majesty. For the more the Sovereign Being acts in character, the more guilty we become, if we refuse obedience to his orders. Now, by the stings of conscience, with which God visits us, he acts as our superiour; since he thereby humbles, he troubles, he terrifies us; he sets before our eyes our sins with all their deformity, our crimes with all their horror, our profanations with all their consequences. Are we not then audacious rebels, Christians, when we suppress the cries of conscience, that so frequently, so feelingly, so cruelly harrow us up? Since we refuse to lend an ear to the remonstrances of our ruler; since we take it ill, that he should reprove us; since we make no account of his threatening to punish us by an eternity of sufferings, by devouring flames, by weeping and gnashing of teeth for endless ages.

Besides, if it be certain, as I have already told you, that there is no grace more constant or more durable than this of remorse, does not your daily opposing it evince how culpable you become, by so doing? Is it not even to declare open war on God? Is it not the same, as if you said to him; Lord! thou art resolved to attack me in all quarters, and I am equally determined to resist thee: if I cannot silence thee,

at least I shall succeed in expelling thee from my heart, which thou art so desirous to take possession of? I will do you justice, dear people, and declare I verily believe there is not one among you, that would utter such horrid blasphemies. But is it not in some measure making use of this impious language, to persist in your sins determinately, in defiance of the importunities of conscience?

And this, Christians, will appear the more credible, if you call to mind I told you that the grace of remorse was, of all others, the most extensive. Whence it evidently follows that, to be rebellious to it, is wilfully to renounce the grace, our Creator makes the greatest use of, and which he does not withhold even from the most abandoned. And what will you have left then? Do you not, by such a conduct, make a hell here below? For one of the greatest torments of the damned is, not so much to feel the gnawings of the worm of conscience, that *never dies*, as to find it out of their power to avail themselves of it's reproaches. Your situation, friends, is not entirely similar; because God gives you these admonitions purposely to recall you to him; and while you have life, you may turn them to a good account, by your conversion. But in fact, what matters it

you may make use of them, if you do not? What signifies their being the most universal and extensive of all graces, if you are determined not to profit by them?

In fine, dear Christians; not to abuse your attention, although the subject concerns you so nearly; I conclude by repeating that the grace of remorse of conscience being the most sure grace, a grace, the least liable to deception, and which most effectually disposes you to repentance, to turn a deaf ear to it, is to want confidence, and open a door, in some measure, to despair. For be assured, on the part of God, when your conscience reproaches you with your irregularities, whatsoever they may be, that the Lord does not forget you, but still looks towards you with an eye of pity. And this for you, habitual, inveterate sinners! is almost the only plank, you have left, to avoid shipwreck. But, in the idea of St. Bernard, if this remorse is the most certain of all graces, to resist it is the most immediate disposition to despondency. Because, in this unhappy state, your conscience, which at present is so clamorous, bringing to light, on the day of trial, all that it had hitherto concealed, will raise up against you such accusers and witnesses, as it will be impossible for you to withstand. *Their*

consciences, says St. Paul, *bearing witness, and their thoughts accusing one another.* Rom. ii, 15. Accusations and evidence, that must overwhelm us with confusion ; since we ourselves shall be obliged to own that we have sinned, that we are inexcusable in what we have done, and that the justice of the Deity, which we have so outrageously insulted, by the multitude of our iniquities, is unblamable in our regard, and clear of censure.

From what I have said, let us infer, dear people, that as long as there remains in the soul of the sinner any symptom of remorse, it is a sign that his conscience is not as yet hardened. But when, amidst the guilt of sin, we live in peace, fearless of death and a woful damnation ; then, I say, we have every thing to dread. Because we cannot flatter ourselves, after the commission of so many crimes, with the hopes of that peace, which according to the expression of Jeremy, is no more : *they healed the breach of my people disgracefully ; saying, peace, peace, and there was no peace.* Jer. vi. 14.

Let our first endeavours then be, dear friends, to sound our heart. Hence, says the wise-man, *issueth life.* Prov. iv, 23. Hence also cometh death : since our Saviour tells us that from this

source proceed adulteries, murders and whatever tends to defile a man. Let us examine, let us know, let us judge ourselves. God sees us, he knows us, and he will judge us by our heart. Let us listen at present to what this conscience dictates, and not be so insensible to our true interests, as to shut our ears to it's remonstrances. Unhappy we, should we prove neglectful of it's warnings. Having reproached us in time, it will upbraid us throughout eternity. Let such be our attention to it, that we may hope to arrive, by it's assistance, at the term of that happy immortality, to which I entreat the Lord in his infinite goodness to conduct us. Amen.

T H E

TENTH SUNDAY after PENTECOST.

On True Devotion:

JESUS SPOKE THIS PARABLE TO SOME, WHO TRUSTED IN THEMSELVES AS JUST, AND DESPISED OTHERS.

LUKE, xviii, 9.

TO place before your eyes in one point of view the guilt of the Pharisee here mentioned; and the merit of the publican; suffice it to observe, my friends, that the former is condemned, because he thinks himself perfect; although no man can tell *whether he be worthy of love or hatred*: Ecclus. ix, 1. because he censures the rest of mankind, as unjust and impious; although we are com-

commanded to judge no one : Matt. vii, 1. because he prefers himself to his neighbours ; although we are told to esteem others better than ourselves. Phil. ii, 3. On the contrary, the publican is justified, because he is humble ; because he confesses his iniquity ; because he confides in the mercies of his God. Such, Christians, is the substance of the gospel read to us on this Sunday ; from which the lesson, that I mean to draw for your instruction, is to remark the distinction between true and false devotion ; between that sterling virtue, which does honour to the Deity, and effects our Salvation ; and that counterfeit piety which, while it catches at the shadow, neglects the substance, and leaves the deluded soul a dupe to it's own impostures.

You must observe, dear people, that there are two kinds of virtue, interior and exterior ; both of which are requisite to the perfection of a spiritual life. To which I add that it is the property of false devotion to clothe itself in the outward garb of the latter ; whilst it totally neglects the inward, and only meritorious qualities of the former. Thus, it will fast, it will pray, it will give alms ; it will generally be remarkable even for it's zealous performance of these and the like external duties ; although, at the same time, it is the slave of self-love, it is distended with conceit and pride, it eyes
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it's neighbour with disdain; and wraps itself up in the swelling folds of it's supposed perfections. This is what I term *false devotion*; as being but the outside, the shell, the bark of virtue, and destitute of the qualities, that characterize sincere and solid piety. That you, my brethren, may learn to shun a rock, that has been fatal to thousands, by seeing what you have to do to be truly virtuous; I purpose to explain to you in this discourse what solid devotion is; which consists first, I say, in rendering to God such an homage, as is worthy of him; and secondly, in executing with fidelity the work, that he has assigned us. These two points I will endeavour to make intelligible and clear; after a petition, to implore that grace, *without which we can do nothing*.

Three things, dear Christians, must concur to make the homage, we pay to God, deserving of his high regard. Our intention must be pure; for God will be served for his own sake solely. Our homage must be orderly, and conformable to his sacred will; and finally, it must be constant, and not apt to change and fluctuate. These three conditions, diligently observed, cannot fail to render our services acceptable to the supreme Being.

The first requisite then, I say, to make your homage

mage worthy of the sovereignty of God, is purity of intention : in which respect St. Augustin makes no distinction between devotion and the worship of God ; nor between the worship of God and his divine love. For what is it, he says, to be devout and to serve the Lord, unless it be to love him ? In a word, by the same commandment, God exacts both our service and our love : because it is impossible to love him without serving him. Do you desire to know, he continues, to what length you are bound to carry this purity of intention, without which your devotion can never be acceptable ? You must carry it so far, as to exclude every other intention, in consecrating yourselves to piety, but God himself. A hard thing this you will say ; but have patience, and I will clear away your difficulties.

From what I have said, infer, my friends, that the Deity regards neither such, as serve him with an eye to human applause and the advancement of their own glory ; nor those mercenary hirelings, whose piety is interested. In regard to the former, it is certain that they are objects of God's horror ; since, like the Pharisees, whom our divine Saviour so pointedly condemns, they observe no regularity of conduct, nor practice any good, but to acquire the esteem of men. And as to the latter,

latter, whose devotion is solely influenced by the hopes of temporary emoluments, depend upon it, his judgment of them is in no regard more favourable.

But here, dear people, I must explain myself, for fear you should suspect I mean to render virtue impracticable; a thing very distant from my design. I am not ignorant that there are certain temporal views, which, according to St. Bernard, enter into the order of charity. For, says this Father, it is morally certain, there will never be, on earth, such a love of God, as to be totally pure and unallayed. The whole secret is to refine that view, whatsoever it may be; and behold, Christians, how to do it. In the first place, reject every intention, which is in itself unjustifiable. For only to aim at the acquisition of worldly goods; to make the pleasure of possessing them your last and final end, without any eye to those of heaven, would be a criminal, a detestable view; a view, which, so far from according with piety, would be subversive of religion. In the second place, give salvation the preference to every thing. Thus, brethren, although the order of God permits you to desire temporal goods, to petition for your daily bread; nevertheless, you must be disposed to sacrifice all such interests to the welfare

fare of your souls, if necessity demands it ; to rest yourselves entirely on the promise of Jesus Christ, who prescribes to *seek in the first place the kingdom of God* ; and to trust that *all other things shall be added to you*. Matt. vi, 33. Lastly, ask for the things of this life, health, riches &c. only with the desire to be enabled to serve God more perfectly, and to acquit yourselves with greater diligence of your respective obligations. Things thus regulated, says St. Bernard, our interest will coincide with that purity of intention, which is required of us as Christians.

On this ground then I leave it to your own decision, whether you can console yourselves with a well-founded assurance of walking in the ways of righteousness. To be truly devout is to adore Jesus Christ *in spirit and in truth* ; to adhere to the mandates of duty, in spite of censure and it's malignity ; to love virtue ; to seek it incessantly ; and to put every spring in play to reach the summit of perfection. Does this picture resemble you, dear people ? And can you flatter yourselves with the thoughts of feeling in your heart the warmth of that sacred charity, which was the glory of the primitive faithful ? What reproaches might I not here be authorized to make you, was I inclined to enter upon a more minute detail ? But let us proceed,

ceed, and examine if our piety be such, as to put us upon serving God according to the rules of his sacred ordinance.

For know, my friends, that our devotion, to be grateful to the Deity, must be conformable to his heavenly will. Now the duty, which he requires of you most explicitly and positively is to comply punctually with his commands. "Do what you will, says St. Bernard, but never entertain a hope of it's being pleasing to the Almighty, if you fail to observe the dictates of his holy law." Did you thoroughly comprehend this maxim, brethren, would you so often be observed to shew a greater keenness in regard to your temporal welfare, a greater eagerness in the pursuit of vanity, a greater acrimony in your censures, a greater malevolence in your resentments, than the most notorious sinners? Ah! dear Christians, strive to be less ostentatious in your piety and more disinterested; less specious and more charitable.

For this, I say, is the only devotion, that God acknowledges, to adhere to his divine precepts; *if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.* Matt. xix, 17. And as for any further practices, let such pious exercises be adopted, according to each one's leisure, (and only such) as are approved of by the Church: whilst it be the province

vince of all to address themselves to their Creator in the morning and in the evening; to raise their hearts to him frequently in the progress of the day, offering to him their employments, their labours, their sufferings and their whole being; to assist, as often as possible, at the adorable sacrifice of the altar, more especially on Sundays and Holidays; to fortify themselves, by frequenting the divine mysteries at proper seasons; to regulate their conduct by such articles of the divine law, as particularly regard their state of life; to do nothing inconsistent with that justice, which is due to every one. Such I say, and such alone, is the religion God requires of us.

But alas! dear people, how shall I express the careless indolence, the greatest part of you discover in regard to your spiritual exercises? You come to them with a backwardness, that betrays an unwilling heart. You undertake them as a task, that custom requires of you, but which inclination does not second. It is not without reluctance you afford one single half-hour to the duties of religion; and even this you think sufficient to deserve the name of pious Christians. What tepidity at your private prayers! what manifest distractions at the public service! what indifference in approaching to the sacred table,
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where Christ feeds you with his own body? Consider these things attentively, my friends; and let your practice decide your merit.

But to what I have here said let us add a third reflection. Our devotion to be sincere, must be durable and constant. God is always, in the same degree, worthy of our homage, and always challenges it alike; nor is there any thing more inconsistent with true piety than the want of this steadiness. As the Almighty Being never ceases to heap his blessings on us, so our hearts should never cease to pay the just tribute of their gratitude. For which reason, St. Paul exhorts us to return him thanks at all times, and for all things.

But what inference are we to draw from this, dear Christians? That to serve God occasionally, and only by fits and starts, is not the devotion he exacts. There are many, who, by adversity, or some distress of mind or body, are led to form pious projects, and to enter their names boldly among the champions of virtue. This may be commendable: for the Lord often permits the world to frown upon us, that we may be under the happy necessity of applying to him. But, in so doing, we must be sincere: nor when the storm is over, are we to throw aside inconsiderately what we had so wisely taken up.

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Otherwise, brethren, but little account is to be made, I think, of such effusions of piety, as are the produce of misfortune, affliction or the like incidental occurrences. For, as metal melts over the fire, but recovers it's former hardness, when again removed from it; so is the heart often pliable, and the eye wet, when heaven threatens; but resume their wonted ease, when the scourge is out of sight. As the waters of the Jordan fell backwards, while the ark was on it's passage; and, when it was over, flowed immediately in their natural course; so neither is it unusual with some people to stop, and suspend the hand of their iniquity, during the moments of their zeal: but this being spent, and their fervour exhausted, they return to their disorders, and that frequently with redoubled eagerness. Such a capricious, temporizing piety as this is, cannot fail to be highly offensive to the Lord, who calls for our service at all times, and under every circumstance, and will be honoured uniformly and constantly. May then our fidelity, besides inducing us to render such an homage to the Deity, as he requires, make us apply ourselves with diligence to the work he has marked out for us.

St. Paul teaches us in what manner to serve God and to be devout. Let each one, may I

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say to you, dear friends, as he said formerly to the Ephesians, be attentive to his own business. If then you would espouse the part of piety, you must consider seriously what is your state of life, what is demanded of you, and study to discharge your obligations faithfully.

Since you are desirous therefore, as I trust, dear people, to embrace the cause of virtue, you must, in the first place, consider who you are and what are your engagements. For know that God positively requires of you an uninterrupted application to the different functions of your state, and it is in this point chiefly that true devotion consists.

But oh! Christians; what ought to be the solid foundation of true piety, is the very article we are most in the habit of neglecting. The generality of people live in a gross and stupid ignorance of their obligations in this regard. They form such plans of pious exercises, as are incompatible with their condition; and scarcely ever pay attention to those, which alone the Lord demands of them. How few are there present, brethren, that have ever reasoned in the manner following? It is necessary that I should acquire the knowledge of my engagements, and learn what God expects of me in my department.

Can I be ignorant that, if I would fulfil the duties of a good Christian, I must carefully attend to the employments of my state; that whatever deviates from this rule, be it's extent how great soever, is a superfluous supererogation, which is neither acceptable to the Deity, nor of any use in a spiritual life?

To how many delusions, nevertheless, does this error give birth? Such a one has his hours of prayer, which no consideration can prevail upon him to interrupt. This is laudable, provided no inconvenience be the consequence. But if this person be obliged to earn his livelihood by the sweat of his brow, I would tell him not to devote that time to prayer, which he should give to labour and the maintenance of his family; for that these duties claim his principal attention.

The heart is the seat of devotion; where when once it has secured a footing, it is productive of the greatest blessings. The grain of wheat, when duly enclosed in the earth, will yield it's fruit: whereas, if thrown upon a rock or the high road, where it must lie exposed, it will prove sterile. In the same manner, brethren, when devotion fails to take root in the heart, it never can support itself; but quickly vanishes, like

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the grass upon the house-top, as the Psalmist says; which withereth before it be plucked up. Ps. cxxviii, 6. This superficial piety will rot for want of roots, and find it's death in it's own shallowness; while true devotion, attached to the calls of it's respective state, goes on from virtue to virtue, and advances daily, to perfection.

Hence, my dear friends, it is obvious that to be truly devout is to aim at what is substantial and obligatory; and not to set our affections on such works of piety, as may tend to distinguish and make us singular. For it is certain, and I entreat you to observe it carefully, that the chief condition of virtue is that it be properly directed; and that every thing essential take place of what is only of supererogation, however showy or attractive it may appear.

Secondly, if any one among you, brethren, wishes to be sincerely virtuous, he should reason thus. As the Almighty Sovereign, in the order of his providence, has placed me under certain obligations in regard to others, there can be no doubt but he confides in me for the performance of those duties. You, for instance, who have servants to till your grounds, to execute your commands, to do the necessary business for your

families &c. it is your part to make them attentive to their Maker and observant of his law. God depends on you for this. You, married people, whom the bond of affection should unite, no less than the tie of interest; it is your concern to promote each other's future, as well as present happiness, and to strive to walk hand in hand in the path of virtue. You, parents, whom the disposal of heaven has blessed with children, it is your first duty to superintend their education. The Lord intrusts to you the care of making him known, obeyed and honoured by them. These, Christians, are the main and leading obligations, he lays upon you: nor can you possibly be faithful servants, without an exact compliance with these, his particular, injunctions.

The third thing, my brethren, you have to do, and which is a necessary consequence of the two preceding, is to neglect, in no one article, the relative engagements, I am here speaking of. If you do, you disturb the economy, established by God, for the honour of his worship. Those, who are subject to you, act as you command them: were they to slight your orders, or to give their application to any thing, but what you had

particularly marked out, would they not derange the whole system of your business? The like confusion you occasion in the house of God, when you neglect his work. In you he confides, I repeat, for the performance of that, which you alone can execute.

For remark, dear people, that, as the various disorders, which creep into the different branches of life, originate in the neglect of the work appointed by the Sovereign Being; so, by a contrary rule, the accomplishment of that work is the parent of peace, tranquillity and genuine devotion. Until you be faithful in this regard, never flatter yourselves with the hopes of any recompense; which God will assuredly never give, but in a degree proportioned to the observance of his will.

Wherefore, brethren, there is no matter more deserving of your attention than this, on which your salvation depends. For we may all, and each individual of us, say; unless I execute my task; unless I perform what God commands me, there is no salvation to be hoped for. It is certain that he rewards none, but his servants; nor is it less so, that I can only deserve to be styled his servant in proportion as I obey his orders.

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What then shall hinder me from fulfilling my engagements to him? Nothing surely can, but the want of inclination. Neither age, penury, sickness, nor the most laborious and painful work can obstruct my being virtuous, if my will be but disposed to it.

Yes, my dear friends; what other people, have done, we may do equally, as St. Augustin says, Every age supplies us with examples of old and young, of married and single, of wealthy and indigent, who have signalized themselves by their virtues, and by their adherence to the Lord. They have been known to observe his precepts and execute his will under all circumstances. Daniel was young, Joseph a slave, Cornelius a soldier, Timothy infirm, Peter a fisherman. The difference of age, of complexion, or of situation did not prevent them from serving their Maker, according to their condition. On the contrary, it was their fidelity in complying with the duties of their calling, that made them so renowned, and worthy of being held up as models of imitation. And nothing but a similar fidelity, be assured, Christians, and a devotion, regulated by and proportioned to your obligations, will ever sanctify you. This is the criterion of a sincere
servant

servant of God, of a person, that is truly virtuous: and by this mark we may know those, whom Christ rejects in his Gospel, who honour him with their lips only: that is to say, who, while they profess to pay obedience to him, do their own will only, and scarce ever that of the Deity.

Hence, my friends, conclude that devotion is not confined to sex, to condition, nor to age: that it is for the layman as for the ecclesiastic, for the married as for the single, for the rich as for the poor. All have it in their power to be strictly devout; and the examples of so many Saints of every state, who have happily reached the term of their felicity, evince that the Author of mankind has placed none of us in such a situation, but it may be sanctified by piety, if our exertions be not wanting.

Finally, dear people, I will close this discourse by addressing to you the important instruction of St. Bernard, Do you wish sincerely to give yourselves to God? If so, pay attention to your affections: see what you love and what you fear; what rejoices and what depresses you. Love only God; or if you love any thing besides; love it purely for his sake. Fear nothing but
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to offend God; or if you fear any thing else, fear it solely inasmuch as it regards him. If losses befall you; if sickness oppresses you; if misery overpowers you; look on every thing of the kind as a proof that he afflicts, in order to purify you, and to unite you to himself more firmly for time and for eternity: as I ardently wish he may us all.

T H E

ELEVENTH SUNDAY after PENTECOST.

On Purposes of Amendment.

THEY BRING TO HIM ONE DEAF AND DUMB.

Mark vii, 32.

SIN, my dear friends, to which the infirmities here mentioned may be said to be allusive, defiles us all from our very birth. Of ourselves, we are incapable of applying for relief; but must be presented by the hands of others: for which reason the Church assigns us God-fathers and God-mothers, who may offer us to the Lord and answer for us. Happy still, were there no other deaf and dumb but those, that come into life tainted with

with this original infection. But alas! scarcely does the dawn of reason discover to man the use of his free will, before he misapplies and perverts it, by the commission of actual sin; which once more involves him in that distress of guilt, from which baptism had freed him. Touched with compassion for his wretched state; *pressed*, as St. Paul says, by the *charity of Christ*, if I do not here intend to lay open to the libertine the filth of his obscenities, to the drunkard the horror of his excesses; to each of them the infinite torments, that await their crimes; I mean at least to cry out to them with the said Apostle; *rise thou that sleepest; arise from the dead, and Christ shall enlighten thee.* Eph. v, 14. Take up a resolution to renounce your evil ways; let the determination be sincere, and the means of putting it in practice efficacious. But to set so important a matter in a clearer light, I design to shew you, first, what are the conditions that should accompany your purposes of amendment; and secondly, what the means you must employ to persevere in them; after a previous address to him, who came to instruct us in the way of salvation.

You have been taught, dear people, from your earliest infancy, that repentance is the only means to effect a reconciliation with God, after the divi-
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sion caused by sin, “ But alas ! says St. Ambrose, the remedy is frequently our poison : the matter of our victory is a subject of triumph to the devil, who is most industrious to supplant us.” Now the causes of this abuse are many. But the principal one is the want of a settled resolution of avoiding sin in future ; to guard you against which, I will inform you what the conditions are, with which this resolution should be attended. It must be sincere ; it must be active ; it must be constant. *Sincere*, to counteract all illusions ; *active*, to prevent your repentance from being barren ; *constant*, to secure you against a relapse.

That your good purposes may be acceptable to the Deity, they must, in the first place, be sincere ; and in this regard I dare to aver, that we are generally deceived. It often happens, says St. Gregory, that the mind flatters and deludes itself ; and to be satisfied of this, I only desire you to speak the truth. When you come to the confessional, you endeavour to persuade yourselves that you are firmly resolved to renounce your crimes for ever. But if you will deign to fathom the recesses of your heart, you will see that your design is not sincere ; and that, at best, it is but very incomplete. Ah ! Christians, hell is full of feeble purposes

poses; if such desires as these could acquit the reprobate, their hell would soon be changed into the happiness of a paradise.

For it is not sufficient, brethren, to say I wish, I intend to reform my conduct. Thus it was St. Augustin reasoned, in the full pursuit of his evil habits. I mean to submit to the yoke of virtue; only let me have a few days more of pleasure. But, oh! he says again, after grace had triumphed over his opposition, when we will, we must will in earnest. To what purpose these delays? Why defer? Why not set about the work immediately? Is not this however the disposition of too many? Like the sluggard, described by the Holy Ghost, they will, and they will not. They will; because they still think virtue eligible, or vice odious. And they will not; because they are not absolutely resolved to embrace the one and quit the other. Their desires are good; but they want the resolution to resist their vitious inclinations. They are loath to offend God; but at the same time, they would be glad to go on in their accustomed ways: i. e. according to the explication of St. Bernard, they would wish to be converted without forsaking their sins; to go to heaven without turning out of the path, that leads to hell. But be not thus imposed on, Christians. He, that desires the end, must use
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the means to attain it. It is a mere delusion to think yourselves penitents, when it is evident you have taken no precaution against sin; and at most have only formed some inefficacious resolutions.

But would you see, dear friends, the model of a true purpose of renouncing vice effectually? St. Paul shall shew it to you. *I am sure, he says, that neither death, nor life, nor things present, nor things to come, nor all creatures combined, shall be able to separate us from the love of God.* Rom. viii, 38. The same, my brethren, should you say; but with a like sincerity and candour. Yes, although the consequence may be that I must beg my bread, I will spare nothing to make my neighbour amends for the injury I have done him; although the world may ridicule me, I will break off my sottish connexions; although I may be reduced to the extremity of indigence, I will not hazard a false oath, to secure my rightful property. In a word, let what will happen; I am determined to suffer every thing, rather than offend my God. But how shall we know that these are not mere words? By the effects: i. e. let our resolution be active.

After all, this second condition of virtuous purposes is but a necessary consequence of the foregoing one: for if they be sincere, they will not confine themselves to promises, but will infallibly produce

produce effects. Antiochus, whose determination to amend his life is only feigned, vents himself in protestations, and does nothing. Zacheus, on the contrary, whose desire of being converted is sincere, says not, *I will do*; but *I do*. *If I have wronged any man, I restore him fourfold*. Luke xix, 8. Here, says Tertullian, is our rule; we must not content ourselves with declarations, like the former; we must act like the latter. Otherwise, there can be no grounds to think our resolutions cordial: and let the following proof convince you of it. How do you know whether a person really wishes to befriend you, or only pays you some empty compliments? By the effects. Such a one tells you that all he has is at your command; by and by you are distressed for money, and have recourse to him for help; all his protestations are but wind. What do you infer from thence? That he only beguiled you with fair words, and was by no means sincere. Let us now see if your conduct, in regard to the Almighty, be not exactly similar. My God! you say, I am extremely sorry that I have offended thee; I will never do the like again. Nevertheless, you once more face the danger; you refuse to keep at a distance from such occasions, as have already triumphed over you. What!

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do you hope to impose upon the Deity? No; he is not to be amused with flattering speeches. To appease his wrath we must not only promise, but perform.

Moreover, if your determination to abandon vice be unfeigned, it must be active; if it be active, it must induce you to renounce not only sin, but all affection to sin. For it is much the same with those, who relinquish vice exteriorly, and at the same time harbour an inclination to it, as with a valetudinarian, who dares not eat some things he is fond of, because they are judged hurtful to him; i. e. he abstains from them with reluctance. Now, is not this the case in general with these self-called penitents? A person, for instance, addicted to impurity, will appear to change his disposition, on going to the sacraments; but, shortly after, you will find him hazarding licentious hints, and renewing his acquaintance with immodesty. Whereas, a true convert will not only detest the exterior acts of this vice, but will likewise do his utmost to efface every thought of it; avoid such company, as he may have formerly been too free in, and entreat his God to deliver him for ever from the assaults of this unclean spirit. Whence, of course, follows the third condition of a purpose of amendment,

ment, which, as I have said, is to be constant and durable; a condition no less necessary than those, already mentioned.

When the Almighty Being vouchsafes to restore us to his favour, he does not seek to make a truce, but a peace with us. *Peace*, he says, *to men of good will*. But if, on coming to confess your guilt, you be not resolved rather to make every sacrifice, than offend your God again, it is not a peace you make with him; but a temporary suspension. You cease to frequent the company of your guilty associates, because Easter is at hand; but you mean to return to them, as soon as that term shall be expired. Is this to make your peace with God? Is it not rather to insult him? To be scoffers, as St. Augustin says, and not penitents?

The strongest proof of which, that I can give; and of which you must feel the whole force, if you will but listen to your conscience, is that the sorrow, you have hitherto conceived for your transgressions, is not a sorrow inspired by heaven; but a sorrow altogether human. For as St. Paul says, *the sorrow, that is according to God, worketh penance steadfastly unto salvation.* 2 Cor. vii, 10. Where remark that he terms it a *steadfast* penance, that must last for ever, and not for a
time

time only. For, as Tertullian observes, where there is not a real change, there is no true repentance ; because it fails to produce the effect, to which it is particularly applied.

After this, dear people, how can you persuade yourselves that a life, which is divided between vice and an apparent conversion, is a christian life ? Open the sacred books, and you will see that all those offenders, who were sincere in their repentance, were studious to avoid relapsing into their former evil habits. Magdalen, on her conversion, forsakes the path of vice. Matthew returns to his office no more ; nor Zacheus to his employment. But all, having once made choice of virtue, adhere to it inviolably.

Such should be your conduct, Christians ; whom I here exhort, with all my power, to take up the resolution to devote yourselves to your maker. Say to him from your hearts ; yes, my God ! the time is at length arrived for sin to be abolished in me, never more to be revived. I have given my promise to the Lord, and I will be faithful to it. My Saviour ! my Father ! my all ! this disposition is thy free gift, nor can it subsist without thee ; preserve it then, I beseech thee ; and as thou hast vouchsafed to be it's authour, so deign to be it's guardian.

But to succeed herein effectually, there is nothing so conducive as to avoid the occasions of sin.

And to instruct you on this head completely, I must inform you, friends, that there are two sorts of the occasions I mention. First, there are those, whose natural effect is to incite us to evil; as to read immoral books, or associate with the profligate &c, which occasions may be termed *active*. And there are others, that we may style *passive* occasions; which are such as bring us into danger, not by their own intrinsic malice, but from relation to our frailty; as play of any kind to them, that know it to be a source of swearing to them; or public diversions to those, who cannot frequent them without risk. Now, that our determination to avoid sin may be justly deemed sincere, active, and constant, I say that we must keep at a distance, from all occasions of this description; and we will here examine briefly the necessity, the nature and extent of this important duty.

First then, to convince you of it's necessity, dear people, it may suffice to cast an eye on our weakness, to be terrified at the sight of the danger. When I behold Adam, placed by the hand of God in the terrestrial paradise, created in innocence, and fortified with the most special graces, proving rebellious to his Creator, at the persuasion of his consort;

fort; alas! I say to myself; what have not we to apprehend? We, who are so frail, and assaulted in such a variety of shapes? When I reflect on the unhappy fall of David, Peter &c. I conclude that we are most strictly obligated to shun every occasion, that may lead us into sin. Weak, and surrounded with powerful enemies, flight is our best security.

For it is proper, you should be informed, Christians, that this attention to avoid occasions is the criterion, whereby to distinguish a genuine from a spurious conversion. The Scripture supplies an history extremely applicable to this subject. By the command of heaven, Saul is deputed to give battle to the Amalecites. God enjoins him expressly to put every thing to the sword. In disobedience to this order, he spares the life of their King, preserves their most valuable effects, and flatters himself still with having executed his commission. *I have fulfilled the word of the Lord*, he says. *What then meaneth*, replies Samuel, *this bleating of the flocks, which soundeth in my ears?* 1 Kings, xv, 14. May I not apply this story to you, my brethren? You suppose that you have *fulfilled the word of the Lord*, because you have laid your offences at the feet of a Priest. But; and may I say it with an authority

equal to that of Samuel; what is it I yet hear then? The voice of that female, who so often has been an instrument of sin to you; the voice of those debauched companions, with whom you have been leagued in the most scandalous pursuits, the voice of your neighbour, who reproaches you with your injustice. Ah! you deceive yourselves. You have not accomplished fully what God required of you. You have done the work by halves only. It is running on your destruction to retain and adhere to those objects, that have so frequently proved your ruin.

And surely the person, who will not avoid the occasions of evil, cannot be said to hate it seriously; and of consequence can never be deemed a sincere and true penitent: since the sacred penman tells us that *he, who loves the danger, shall certainly perish in it.* In fact, who can be persuaded that the man who refuses to shun the former occasions of his sins, does not retain an affection to them? Since it would be absurd to think that he who will confederate with the loose and abandoned, detests and abhors their company. But you feel, I make no doubt, the necessity of avoiding the occasions of vice; although perhaps you are ignorant how far this obligation may extend.

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And on this point the Gospel will satisfy you fully. *If thy hand or foot, says our Redeemer, scandalize thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than, having two hands or two feet, to be cast into everlasting fire.* Matt. xviii, 8. Such, my friends, is the doctrine of our Legislator and Master. And what does it imply? But that we are bound to relinquish every thing that provokes us to offend the Deity. A celestial doctrine, to which it is our duty to submit implicitly.

The Wiseman likewise, by a very simple comparison, gives us to understand how far this obligation of shunning the occasions of sin reaches. *Fly from them, he says, as from the face of a serpent.* Eccclus xxi, 2. On which passage, interpreters enquire why we are not commanded to fear vice, as we should a lion or a tyger. Because these animals, they answer, ferocious as become in time, are not violent, when young. But a serpent is at all times dreadful; it's poison is dangerous from it's very birth. Such, and still greater, should be the terrour of a Christian in regard to sin. He should even fear it, before it shews itself; and avoid the first appearance of it, as the approach of a monster, which, from the instant of it's birth, is sufficient to destroy him.

This is what we should do, to act prudently and wisely: nay, we should do more. By which I mean that it is not enough for a Christian, who has his salvation at heart, to shun the *immediate occasions* of sin, and such as would plunge him into vice infallibly; but he must dread the very face of sin, the *most distant occasions* of it; and that especially, when there is a probability of their reviving such evil propensities, as he may have formerly been subject to. Occasions of this description, weak and harmless as you may think them, St. Peter Chrysologus terms *smoking firebrands*, which the slightest breath is apt to rekindle. You promise, for instance, to drop all acquaintance with that person, who has led you into sin; but you keep the presents, you have received from him. Shall I then tell you what I think of it, and which possibly is but too true? If you do not relapse into your former crimes, the desire of repeating them is not perhaps extinct.

If therefore your resolution to offend God no more be cordial, you will be attentive to find out whence your frailties take their rise. You will say, for example; what is the cause of these immodest thoughts, that infest me? Is it not frequenting this or that company; or an intemperate indul-

indulgence of my appetite? Whence the source of those slanders, and uncharitable discourses, respecting my neighbours, and them that displease me? Is it not my connexion with such or such people, who cannot open their lips, without detracting? What is the occasion of my swearing, or getting drunk so often? Is it not gaming or the ale-house? And the root being thus discovered, stop not there; but put your hand heartily to the work. Avoid those occasions; keep at a distance from that company; shun all drinking places, and every incitement to sin. In fine, hearken to St. Jerom, who tells you it is the extreme of folly to live quietly in a situation, in which you are continually exposed to the alternative, of either conquering, or perishing.

Nevertheless, oh wretched blindness! How many Christians are there, who, so far from taking their precautions against the danger of occasions, court and invite them even; or, at least, presume they shall come off victors whenever they please to try it? For it is a just observation, that there is hardly any point of morality, on which people are more industrious to find excuses than on this. But be sincere, my friends, and a few words will convince you how frivolous the pretences are, with which
you

you endeavour to exculpate and palliate your remissness.

You do not mean, you say, to offend God by not forsaking such or such occasions. Ah! brethren, what a pitiful plea? Where is the sinner, be who he may, the thief, the murderer, or what you please, that pretends directly to attack the Deity? Such an attempt can only be peculiar to hell. But although you have not a formal and explicit design of doing it, are you the less guilty of it in fact? What would you think of a man, who refusing to quit the flames, that surround him on every side, should say he had no intention to endanger or expose himself? Your folly, is still greater, Christians, to imagine you shall not sin, amidst the allurements of iniquity.

However you hope, it seems, that God will assist you, although you continue in the occasion. But what assurance have you for thinking so? Where has he promised it? or to whom? Turn over the sacred pages: you will not find a single passage, in which the Lord ensures his grace to them, that wilfully persists in the occasions of vice. You will not find the example of any one sinner, to whom he has granted this favour. When God promises to support us under temptations, this is
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not meant of such trials, as we deliberately venture into. He has not pledged himself to work miracles, in order to authorize our presumption. It is true, he has preserved some holy persons under circumstances, that were particularly trying; the principles of Job, amidst the contagion of infidelity; the chastity of Joseph, from the sollicitations of his master's wife; the virtue of Susanna, against the assaults of two old lechers. But observe, Christians, these were occasions, to which they had in no degree exposed themselves; and look upon it as a certainty that, if you wilfully meet the danger, it is more than probable you will fall in it.

From all this, dear people, what is to be concluded? unless that, if you desire to persist in your pious purposes, you must frequently have recourse to God, and say to him with the Apostles in the moment of danger; *save us, O Lord! we perish.* At present, by thy grace, our resolutions are firm; but we are encompassed with enemies, bent on our destruction. We have abjured vice, it is true; but have we abandoned all the occasions of it? If thou O Lord! dost not support us, we still shall be lost. The first temptation will overthrow us. We shall infallibly sink, if thou only withholdest thy hand, though only for a moment.

moment. *Save us or we perish.* O God! our Creator! preserve the work of thy mercy; and grant that, as we have now formed the happy purpose of adhering to thee, we may be so courageous as to avoid the occasions, that may again involve us in a state of sin; and that, having served thee here on earth, we may possess thee for ever in heaven. Amen.

T H E

TWELFTH SUNDAY after PENTECOST.

On the LOVE of GOD.

THOU SHALT LOVE THE LORD, THY GOD.

Luke, x. 27.

TWO points, dear Christians, present themselves in this day's gospel; on which, as our Redeemer assures us in another passage, the whole divine law depends: viz. the love of God and the love of our neighbour. The following discourse I mean to confine entirely to the subject of the love of God; convinced that, if you but execute with fidelity this first and most momentous
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of all commands, you will surely observe the second; as it is a thing impossible not to love our neighbour, if we sincerely love the Deity.

Wherefore, without canvassing the views of the Jewish teacher, in proposing that question to Jesus Christ; *What must I do to possess eternal life?* let us humbly attend to the answer of this wise oracle. *What is written in the law?* Let us take this remark to ourselves, and apply it to our own instruction. What does the law ordain then? *how read we there? Thou shalt love the Lord thy God.*

But in what manner, you will ask? *With all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy strength.* lb. Let us measure our love of God, my friends, by that which he has testified for us. His was a sincere love; it was an ardent love. The sincerity of his love induced him to forsake the bosom of his heavenly Father, and take up his abode with us. The ardour of his love impelled him to embrace the ignominy of the cross. If therefore we desire to fulfil his sacred precept, let us return him the like affection, and love him as he has loved us. Let us love him with a sincere love; i. e. let it be our study to please him, and our dread to offend him; saying to him frequently with St. Augustin; O my God! I love thee, and it is my wish to love thee still more. Let us love him with an ardent

dent love ; in adversity, as in prosperity ; in sickness, as in health. But principally let us love him with a love of preference : so as to love him above all things, and nothing else but for his sake. In order to excite the warmth of this divine charity in your breasts, Christians, I purpose, first, to shew you that the Lord deserves our whole love ; and secondly, to point out the means, by which we may be enabled to make him duly the return of love we owe him. Sacred model of heavenly affection ! assist us by thy grace, and infuse into our souls that light, which alone can guide us safely to the knowledge of thy truth.

We need but consult our reason, dear people, to be satisfied of this position, *that God merits our whole love*. Every thing assures us that nothing is so deserving of our affection and esteem, as a God, who has created us ; a God, who has redeemed us ; a God, who means to reward us with the enjoyment of himself. What he has already done for us in the order of *nature*, and in the order of *grace* ; and what he designs to add in future in the order of *glory*, are motives more than sufficient to convince the hardest understanding of the numerous inducements, we have, to love and venerate our God.

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To be satisfied, dear people, that he merits all our love, on account of what he has done for us in the line of *nature*; let us cast our eyes back on our original extraction. What were we then? Absorpt in the abyſs of *nothing*, a ſtrong and mighty arm was requiſite to draw us out of it. Of ourſelves we were incapable of contributing any thing towards it. Nothing leſs could effect it than the hand of a Sovereign Being; who, by the diſpoſition of his adorable love, was pleaſed to free us from the gulph, in which we were immerſed. It is God therefore, brethren, who created us; it is God, who has diſtinguiſhed us from the inſenſible herd of brutes, and ſtamped on our foreheads the glorious character of reaſon. No, ſaid the mother of the Machabees, I did not make you what you are. *I neither gave you breath nor life; neither did I frame the limbs of any of you.* Nothing of this is my work. It is the work of him, who made the heavens and the earth: it is the work of the ſovereign Creator, *who formed the nativity of man, and found out the origin of all*, Mac. ii, 7, 22. What an unceaſing ſenſe of gratitude does not ſo ſignal a favour call for? Could he be any ways intereſted in giving us this exiſtence? Would he otherwiſe have been leſs great, leſs happy, leſs

God

God, in fine, than he is at present? No, my friends. It was our welfare solely then he consulted in this work, and in return for so great a blessing he requires only our love. Can we be so ungrateful as to refuse him his just due?

You want no exhortation to induce you to love your kindred, your friends, your benefactors. You readily share your affections with them, and make them a tender of your services. Neither need you be told to love perishable creatures, brethren. How common is it with us to affect them to a degree of folly even? For thee alone, our Creator! we cannot harbour the like sentiments. Neither thy power, thy bounty, thy munificence, nor thy goodness can soften our insensibility.

If you admire creatures; if you discover any good in them; from whence, I pray, is it derived, unless from the Deity? Go therefore to the fountain-head, to the primordial goodness. Go to that pure source; and do not draw upon yourselves the reproach, which God made formerly to his favoured nation: *My people hath done two evils: they have forsaken me the living fountain; and have dug to themselves cisterns, that can hold no water.*

From the benefit of our creation, to pass on to that of our preservation: is it not evident that the hand, which gave us our existence, still supports
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and preserves it? *In him we live*, says St. Paul, *we move and we exist*. Was he to withdraw his watchful care, although for a single instant only, the economy of our frames would soon dissolve; our vital powers would refuse their functions, and we should be reduced to the same condition, as if we never had existed. But oh! the mercies of our God! His almighty will ordained it, and we were produced out of nothing: his indulgence still prevails, and we are kept from relapsing into it. Each day, every moment, he is in the centre of us, to preserve, although he could annihilate us; and to maintain us in that being, which he originally gave us. And what does he ask of us in return for so many favours? Our love; that love, which he challenges so justly.

But, ungrateful wretches as we are, instead of loving and revering him, shall we carry our malice so far as to turn his gifts to his dishonour? Is this, may I say to you, my brethren, as the prophet said formerly to the Israelites, *Is this the return thou makest to the Lord, O foolish and senseless people? Is it not he, who made and who created thee? Is he not thy Father?* Deut. xxxii, 6. You have abandoned God, who gave you life: and you have forgot the Lord, who still preserves it.

To these general proofs of his bounty add, if you please, my friends, the particular marks of affection, which he has, and continues daily to heap upon you so liberally. *What hast thou says the Apostle, that thou hast not received?* 1 Cor. iv, 7, Who feeds you, but God? Who gives you strength to work and gain a livelihood, but God? Who preserves you in health but God? Who comforts you under your afflictions, but God? Who heals your infirmities, but God? Let the sense then of these, and the innumerable other favours, which you hourly receive from him, excite your hearty gratitude; and whatever part of the creation you may in future cast your eyes upon, admire his wonders, and be thankful for his blessings.

What shall I render to the Lord, says the Psalmist, for all he hath rendered to me? Ps. cxv. Thou, my God! didst create me; I will therefore devote my whole being to thy service. My eyes shall be fixed on thee alone: my hands shall be employed solely in executing thy commands: my mouth shall be opened to praise thee: all the powers of my soul shall be occupied in adoring thy infinite attributes. Thou shalt be as a seal on my heart, to secure it from every motion,

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that does not tend to bless thy mercies. But if David, notwithstanding so complete a dedication, still apprehended being cold and ungrateful to his Creator; what would have been his fears, if like you, the sole return he had made to his gracious God, had been an injurious disgust, a criminal resistance? How great would have been his alarm if, like you, he had seen, in his own person, all the rights of his maker violated, by obscenity, by drunkenness, by debauchery? How lively his dread, if, in lieu of the aspirations, which his loving heart suggested, he had found it only disposed to offend and insult his God, by injustice, by detraction, by blasphemy?

Another motive, Christians, to engage us to consecrate and devote our hearts to God, is that he hath loved us to such a degree, as to give us his only Son. To such an astonishing degree, I say. For it is no earthly sovereign, who has done us this honour. It is God himself. He has loved us, although we were useless to him, with a gratuitous love. He has loved us, although we were his enemies, with a generous love. He has loved us, not only so far as to give us our life, and to preserve us in the enjoyment of it; but to such a pitch even, as to bestow upon us his own, his well beloved, his only Son.

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To conceive the happiness of our redemption, let us reflect on the state, we were reduced to by sin, and on the condition, to which the divine grace has exalted us. Sin had made us enemies to the Deity, and undeserving of his further notice. But (thanks to our Saviour who has emancipated us from this evil) of enemies, we are become his friends, his children, and coheirs, to say more, to the glory of his kingdom. Alas! my God! if all the gratitude, of my soul be scarcely competent to express my acknowledgment for the favour of my creation, to which thy word alone was sufficient; what effusions of love does not the blessing of my redemption claim, which thou wert pleased to effect by the sacrifice of thy blood? But why, my Jesus! must thou bleed? Would not thy tears have been enough? Yes; they would have amply sufficed to appease the justice of thy Father; but in no degree to satisfy the tenderness of thy charity. And is it possible, dear friends, the only return he requires of us should be that of our love? Is it possible there should be hearts, so callous and impenetrable, as to withhold this love from him?

Divine Saviour! take possession of my heart, and kindle in it thy sacred flames. I can say; and

you can say with me, brethren ; nay, we are all bound to say ; the Son of God *has loved me* ; and because *he has loved me, he has given himself for me.* Gal. ii, 20. For me, I say ; and I refuse to give myself to him ; I do not live, for him ; I do not think of him ! What a mystery is my heart ! Abel is murdered by his brother ; Job covered with ulcers ; Joseph sold for a slave ; David insulted by his son. It was not for my sake they suffered ; yet my heart, by a natural sensibility, sympathizes with them. To redeem me, Jesus Christ was insulted, like David ; was sold, like Joseph ; was covered with wounds, like Job ; in fine, was murdered, like the unhappy Abel ; and my heart, my inconsistent heart, can scarcely interest itself in his sorrows. What more, ungrateful, obdurate Christians ! must God do to merit your love ? Do not the outrages he bore, the humiliations he stooped to, the torments he endured, plead loud enough in his favour ? To remain insensible to such proofs of his unbounded affection, is in fact to oppose an excess of ingratitude to an excess of love. It is to insult the redemption effected by Jesus Christ, and trample on his grace.

If the sight of such inestimable favours makes no impression on you, my friends, tell me what can. But O God ! we begin to feel the weight
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of our ingratitude ; grant that henceforth we may love thee as much as hitherto we have slighted thee ; and that the greatness of thy bounty may at once be the motive and the measure of our future love.

It is certain that we are bound to love God for the blessings, we receive from him in this life ; had we nothing to expect at his hands in the life to come. But there are eternal goods besides, which he has authorized us to hope for, if we serve him with fidelity : even the possession of himself ; which all may look for from his justice, who await his coming patiently in the discharge of their obligations. Let us adhere closely to this *blessed hope*. Let us love the Lord, because he has created, and now preserves us ; let us love him, because he has redeemed, and still crowns us with benedictions ; and finally, let us love him, because he will hereafter be our great reward, our last end, our sovereign good.

Yes, divine Saviour ! I hope that thou wilt perfect in me the work of thy benevolence. Such is my hope, in defiance of my past sins ; because I consider them as cancelled by thy infinite merits. Such is my hope, in defiance of my present infirmities ; because I look up to thee as the supplement of my justice. Such, in fine, is my hope, in

defiance of every future temptation; because I believe thee to be near to defend and support me.

But what, my friends, is required of us to make that return to our God, which he challenges on so many titles? *Thou shalt love him*, says our Preceptor, *with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy strength.*

Where observe, Christians, that it is not only our heart the Lord demands; but it is our whole heart; for our love must be undivided and without reserve. To love God with all our heart is to consider him as our last end; as that main and grand object, to which every other affection must be ultimately referred. It is to think nothing, to say nothing, to do nothing, that is not perfectly consistent with the charity, which he exacts. It is to love him without dissimulation; and not as that false people loved him, whom our Saviour reproaches that *they honoured him with their lips, while their hearts were far from him.* Matt. xv, 8. It is to esteem him above every thing; to put nothing in competition with him; to love him preferably to all things. It is to offer him an entire heart, a heart unshared; for *wo to them that are of a double heart.* Eccle. xii, 14. In short, it is to love nothing with him, which we do not love

love purely for his sake. For as he has purchased our affection at the expense of his life, he will never consent to put up with a rival.

Behold then, brethren, your want of fidelity, when you agree to divide your heart between God and his creatures : when you give the world a share in that affection and love, which he claims entirely. How many perhaps are you acquainted with, who, solely bent on their temporal interests, go so far as to forget their maker, and neglect his service, and that even on such days, as should be wholly devoted to him? He allows you, Christians, to gain a livelihood, to cultivate your lands, and to pursue and enjoy the profits of your labour. If you direct your employments to him, by making his service your ultimate intention; you act for him, you work for him, and you pay him that tribute of love, he is so justly entitled to. But what irritates him is that you are so eager in the pursuit of gain, as to withhold from him the love, he requires as his due. Might I not, with justice, address that severe reproach to you, which the Prophet Elias made to those Jews, who divided their heart between God and Baal. How long will you be doubtful? If the Lord be the true God, why do you hesitate to serve him? Or if Baal be your Deity, why not give yourselves to him?

him? The like I say to you, my friends, each individual of whom I should be happy to gain to Christ. Examine, and see who the supreme Being is, that challenges your service. If he be the Lord of heaven and earth, who insists on your loving him with an undivided affection, determine either to follow or forsake him at once. But, if the proposal of forsaking God shocks you, as it certainly must, resolve upon giving yourselves to him entirely; upon loving him in the manner he exacts of you. i. e. with all your heart and with all your soul.

Now, it will be an easy matter to decide whether or no you love the Lord as you ought, by enquiring if you do, for his sake, what they, who love the things of the world, do in order to obtain the possession of them. No reasonings are wanted to solve this point; your practice alone is sufficient to decide it. What is there you do not attempt to acquire and obtain money? From the break to the close of day you toil with diligence, with perseverance, with pleasure. No drudgery deters, no difficulties obstruct, no perils affright you. And why? because you love that money, which you grasp at so eagerly. Decide for yourselves then, Christians. Can you say you love God? You, who will not submit to any
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inconvenience for his service, and yet defy all opposition, when your temporal interest is in question? If you can think that you love him with this mode of acting, be better informed by the Apostle of love, St. John, who tells you, that *he, that saith he knoweth or loveth him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.* John, ii, 2. 4.

Know, my friends; for it is a matter of importance, it behoves you to know; that, by the most common, accustomary, and indifferent actions, you have it in your power to give proofs of your love of God; if you be but careful to exclude from them whatever is sinful and offensive to his presence. Thus, the concerns of your family, your daily labours, the employments of your profession; every thing, in short, as the Apostle says, *whether you eat, or whether you drink*, may have God for it's end, may be referred to him, and may confirm you in his charity.

Away then with that coolness, which, to palliate it's indifference, dares to allege the duties and obligations of it's state, as obstacles to this active love. No great sacrifice is required of you, says a holy Father; no painful or laborious efforts. All that is demanded is to permit this sacred charity to excite, animate, invigorate you, and diffuse
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it's enlivening glow over all your actions. Nothing further will be necessary to deserve that approbation, which the Lord gave in person to the fidelity of Abraham; *Now I know thou fearest God.* Gen. xxii, 12. You complain that the hurry and embarrassments of your calling prevent you from attending to him; and that you are busied from the dawn of day with your necessary occupations. It may be so. But direct your work to the Lord; labour with an intention to accomplish his will; and I will be answerable for your love and respect; *Now I know thou fearest God.* You, who seem to have been introduced on the theatre of life only to suffer from poverty, from sickness, or from distress, suffer cheerfully, because such is the will of your Creator, and he himself will assure you that you reverence and love him; *Now I know thou fearest God.* Ye parents, employ yourselves, in a spirit of Christianity, in feeding the little ones, his providence hath blessed you with: Ye children, be docile and submissive to your parents. In a word, all you that hear me, whatsoever be your condition, do every thing for God's sake, and with the desire of serving him; and be convinced that you love him in the manner he requires.

To love the Lord with all our strength is to
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love him constantly and with perseverance. Our love of God is unworthy of his regard, unless it be eternal like himself. To love him as he demands, we must not be contented with a transitory love, which withers as soon as it buds almost. Continual benefactions call for a never-ceasing gratitude: this is a settled principle, a principle, which all the Fathers have endeavoured to inculcate. St. Augustin, commenting on those words of David, *Seek ye the Lord, seek his face evermore*, argues thus; *Why seek the Lord?* Either we shall, or shall not find him. If we are sure not to find him, why should we seek him? And if we are certain of finding him, what necessity of searching for him. Alas! subjoins this Saint, we must seek him without ceasing, whom we must love without intermission. Of this we see a figure in the book of Leviticus; where the Lord commanded the Israelites to keep upon their altars a continual fire; *the fire on the altar shall always burn*; Levit. vi, 11. and, for this purpose, he appointed ministers, whose employment was to feed and preserve it in it's vigour: wherefore to love God is not enough Christians. Our love of him must be durable. After the example of these ministers, we must be attentive to keep it up, and nourish
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it with proper fuel. An affection that is not constant, can never be sincere.

Where are those among you, Christians, who love your God in this manner? How many, on the return of some festival, or in certain fits of devotion, which now and then occur, declare that they love him? But these solemnities being passed, does not their ardour quickly evaporate, and give place to their former indifference?

I have to reproach you, says the Deity, by the mouth of the beloved disciple, with having abandoned me, after so many protestations of attachment. What is become of that affection, which you vowed to me so repeatedly, at the foot of the altar? I now see nothing in you but a languid and feeble charity. What excuse can you offer in vindication of your fickleness? Is it the difficulty of loving the Lord uniformly and constantly? A truly frivolous pretence, says St. Augustin. It is a much easier matter to adhere to God, than to creatures. Disgust cannot fail to be the consequence of such connexions; for defects will appear, and imperfections betray themselves. But in the love of God there are no mortifications to be experienced, nothing offensive to be apprehended. Or, if there should be

be any briars to molest and give pain, love will blunt their acuteness, and make them bearable.

O Lord! I here offer to thee the hearts of all those, that compose this assembly; and I hope there is no one present, that will dissent from what I do. No, my sovereign good! I will henceforth love nothing but thee. For *what have I in heaven? and beside thee what do I desire on earth? Thou art the God of my heart, the God of my soul, my inheritance, my portion for ever.* Psalm lxxii, 25. Enable me then, I beseech thee, to love thee incessantly and fervently. Thou art my weight, my bias, who dost incline me whichsoever way thou pleasest. *My soul thirsteth after thee.* Ps. xli, 2. When will the happy day arrive, in which I *shall appear before my God.* Ib. and declare my love to him? May I expire in the embraces of thy charity, my God! and yield up my life in those breathings of affection, in which must commence my everlasting felicity. Amen.

T H E
THIRTEENTH SUNDAY
After PENTECOST.

On PERSEVERANCE.

THY FAITH HATH MADE THEE WHOLE.

Luke, xvii. 19.

ONE of the most important and weighty maxims, established by the gospel, and on which the whole economy of salvation depends, is this, that we can promise ourselves no future happiness, unless we steadily continue to obey the mandates of religion. It is not enough to solicit, or even to receive from Christ the cure of our present infirmities. We must *give glory to God*
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with this Samaritan, and adhere to him uniformly, if we would be blessed with those words ; *thy faith hath made thee whole.* He, says our divine oracle, *shall be saved, who shall persevere* in the practice of virtue, not for a day, a month, or many years even, but *to the end* of his life. Perseverance then alone can ensure salvation. It is some advance, indeed, to choose the right road, and walk on in it : but this alone will not suffice. To conduct us to the term of the inheritance, proposed to us, our endeavours must be crowned with persistence and constancy. *He that persevereth to the end, he shall be saved.* Matt. xxiv, 13. And to instruct you, brethren, on so essential a point, which must be decisive of your eternal welfare, I design at present to lay before you, first, the motives that should induce you to continue firm to your duty ; and secondly, the perils, to which you wilfully expose yourselves by an inconstancy in virtue. Jesus, the lover and seeker of our souls ! enable us by thy grace to be attentive to our welfare ; a blessing, we now supplicate through thy powerful mediation.

To engage you to walk with steadiness in the road of salvation, Christians, I here offer three motives, which, if you allow them their weight,
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cannot fail to succeed. The first is the quality of the master, whom you serve: the second, the insult offered him, when you abandon his service: the third, the consolations, of which you thereby deprive yourselves. A brief investigation of the motives here proposed; will, I flatter myself, rouse and invigorate your zeal.

And first, dear people, one of the strongest motives, to induce you to persevere in God's service is his admirable power; that sovereign power, of which the scriptures exhibit so many and such convincing proofs. *He spoke, says the holy text, and they were made.* Psalm, cxlviii. 5. What instances of this attribute did he not display to the Jews; particularly when he meant to free them from the bondage of Egypt? You doubtless know this history. At the presence of Moses, the waters of the sea divide, and leave an open passage for the children of Israel: and at his command they again unite, and swallow up the host of the pursuing Egyptians. Whence that celebrated canticle, which will exist an everlasting monument of the power of the Supreme Being. *Who is like to thee among the strong, O Lord! Who is like to thee in bcliness, terrible and praise worthy? Who, but thou, can do such wonders?* Exodus, xv, 11.

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Behold the productions of nature, which, though common, are not the less astonishing. See the formation of the most minute insects, and consider the wonders of their structure. But if the Deity, says Tertullian, be so admirable in the smallest things, how does his power shine out in those larger works of the creation, which we cannot reflect upon without amazement? And what is the result of these reflections? God is infinitely great; therefore I should worship him constantly. What! shall a being so powerful demand our homage, and we refuse it? Shall he require us to be ever faithful, and we grow tired with offering him the slender tribute of our respects?

But the most High, who thus exacts our constant service, is not only infinitely powerful, my friends; he is also infinitely good, and good to us. How many proofs present themselves in evidence of what I assert? First, he has loved us eternally; he has loved us gratuitously; he has loved us undeservingly. Secondly, he has redeemed us from the state of perdition, in which we were involved; by sending his only Son among us; *that whosoever believeth may not perish, but may have everlasting life.* Thirdly, he spares us; he bears with us; he withholds his hand from striking, when we insult him. Fourthly, to these

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numerous marks of his kindness, add that multitude of favours, which he lavishes upon us. For we have nothing but through his bounty. *What hast thou,* says the Apostle, *that thou hast not received?* 1 Cor. iv, 7. No, Christians, we possess nothing, whether temporal or spiritual, but what is immediately the gift of this our amiable God.

Now, if the sense of these blessings had such an effect on David, as to induce him incessantly to glorify the Lord, how is it possible that we should be so wretchedly ungrateful? How is it possible we should be tired of serving our Benefactor? The Angels are continually in the presence of his Sovereign Majesty; and why should not we, as well as they, make it our only business to do his will? The queen of Sheba said to Solomon, *Blessed are thy servants, who stand before thee always, and bear thy wisdom.* 3 Kings, x. 8. And wherefore, Christians, do you not deem it your truest happiness to be always in the presence of your God, and your greatest misfortune to be separated from him? You forsake him; but do you know the injury you do him? The second motive I mean to make use of to engage you to perseverance.

But to serve God then, you will say, is it requisite to be so remarkable? May we not be virtuous, and yet live like other people? I confess,
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my friends, this point is not easily to be decided. Our God is a jealous God ; he will not suffer a division ; he insists on our declaring for him, not only openly, but constantly. To adhere to the Deity and the world at the same time is a thing utterly impossible. For if God loves you more than the generality of mankind ; and if, in consequence of his love, he requires more of you ; in these circumstances how will you act ? If unfortunately you incline to the side of the world, what can you think of it yourselves ? Is it not to be guilty of the most vile ingratitude, the most crying injustice ? This, Christians, is the fatal rock, against which our Saviour cautions us, when he says that he, who pretends to serve two masters, will of necessity *love the one, and despise the other*. Matt. vi, 24. What is it you do then, when, from timidity, or any human respects whatever, you forsake the service of your Maker ? It is, as if you said ; Lord ! I would serve thee in preference to the world, if I could but elude the censures of mankind ; I esteem virtue, and I should be glad to practice it ; but if I do not fulfil my obligations to thee, it is because the world will not permit me. Can you conceive a greater ingratitude, a grosser baseness ?

Moreover, observe, dear people, how culpable

your way of acting is, when you pretend to share your hearts between God and fordid creatures. You would be glad to serve the Deity; but you desire to join the world and your destructive passions with him.

Do you not see then that you put the objects, to which you pay so great an attention, on a level with your Creator? You make of them so many divinities; i. e, you raise up to yourselves other Gods, besides the true one. A crime, which the Lord has always viewed in a most black and offensive light; because as he is the only living God, he will never suffer any thing to be placed on an equality, or even in competition with him.

Add to all this, Christians, that in forsaking our Sovereign good; we bid adieu to all contentment. For in short, can we be happy, when at variance with him? Whatever we may do to suppress the remorse of a galled conscience, we cannot hide from ourselves that we are at enmity with God; that we live under the dominion of the Devil, and that we are continually exposed to the danger of being lost. We see hell open, and we know that we are liable to be cast into it every moment.

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On the contrary, you, who are faithful to your God, step forth and declare your feelings; those tender emotions of joy and gratitude, that gently agitate your hearts, and fan the flames of heavenly charity. Endeavour then, my friends, to find the Lord. Attach yourselves to him: forsake him not, and you will never be in want of any thing. You will be filled with spiritual consolations, the most valuable of all precious things. You will be satisfied with the temporal goods, that God shall please to give you. You will thank him for them; and, with however parsimonious a hand he may have dealt them out to you, you will acknowledge his liberal bounty, and that you have still a larger portion of them than you can possibly deserve. These motives, may be sufficient, I hope, to induce you to be faithful to your Maker, and to serve him with perseverance. I will next touch upon the dangers, to which an inconstancy in virtue lays you open.

Two very simple propositions, brethren, will shew you what these dangers are. First, the means of salvation, which would be productive of the conversion of other sinners, are often useless and invalid to the fickle and unstable. Secondly, the obstacles of salvation, which are with difficulty surmounted by other sinners, are infinitely harder

to be overcome by an offender of the above cast, Two reflections, that are calculated to make you sensible how much it concerns you to persevere in virtue resolutely.

And to take up this matter properly, Christians, let us consider what the usual means of conversion are. The bare exposition of them will convince you they are but too often lost on an inconstant person, who grows tired of persevering in the service of his God. The first resource, that grace makes use of to reclaim the straying sinner, is, according to St. Paul, the knowledge of the truth. This discovers to him the world and eternity in their genuine colours, in which, till then, he had never viewed them. Then it is that the soul, undeceived and clearly enlightened, sees the nothingness of all sublunary things, and the solidity of those of heaven; the emptiness of creatures, and the plenitude of the Creator; in a word, the paltry vanity of all that is not God.

The second resource of salvation, favourable to ordinary sinners, is the influence of such heavenly gifts, as grace diffuses in their hearts; and to which the Lord generally adds a certain gust and relish for virtue. Grace strews the first steps of repentance with a sensible consolation, a secret pleasure, we experience in bearing a yoke, that had
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hitherto appeared intolerable; a solid content, which the heart feels, on being lightened of it's heavy burthen. *Thou hast broken my bonds,* says David, at the beginning of his conversion. Howsoever bitter my chalice, O God! I receive it with joy. The tongues of men do not deter me; on the contrary, they confirm my resolution. *I said in my excess every man is a liar.* Yes, O Lord! I prefer being ranked among thy servants and children to all the crowns, the universe can offer. *I am thy servant and the son of thy handmaid.* Ps. cxv. But all these means, my friends, are lost on those giddy people, who, in a fit of devotion, vow allegiance to their maker, and yet return to the world in the same breath almost.

I do not exaggerate, Christians, when I say that the knowledge of the truth; that resource, which is so beneficial to other offenders, becomes useless to those here mentioned. And indeed, have they not a thousand times defeated the aims of heaven, by their levity and mutability? For what further impression can the principles of faith make on them? Previously to their fall, they were conversant in those paths, which these same principles discover to every one. Informed and enlightened, they were by no means ignorant of the immensity of the eternal rewards; of the emptiness of

of the world's promises; of the vanity of it's allurements; of the nothingness of all but God. Grace then has no fresh helps in store for you, inconstant sinners, as it has for others. You are no longer struck, dazzled, overpowered by their light; and, if they are not yet entirely extinguished in you, at least they have lost the charm of novelty, which has so much influence on other converts. But this is not all, dear people. For I add moreover that your condition is truly deplorable, if you are so unfortunate as to be of the number of those, who, after frequent returns to God, as often quit his service. What method must grace adopt to attract you to her, and fix your unsteadiness? You, who have already a thousand times gone over from grace to sin, from virtue to vice? What untried inspiration can be offered to you? What additional gift of the Holy Ghost, that you have not already frequently received, tasted and despised? To triumph over a soul, that has hitherto been insensible to a single call is often sufficient. But what effect can the most powerful attractions of grace produce on your hearts, habituated to melt; and which no sooner recover from their fall, than they are ready to relapse again? I have no intention herein to harrow up any one's

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conscience with idle terrours ; but to rouse all from their torpor : and I declare to them, after Jesus Christ, that it is next to an impossibility to be saved in such a state. *No one, says our Redeemer, that puts his hand to the plough and looks back, is fit for the kingdom of God: Luke, ix, 62.* that is to say, that of all men, there is no one less likely to obtain a share in his inheritance than the man who grows weary in the prosecution of his duty.

Ye foolish Galatians ! may I say with St. Paul ; who, beginning in the spirit, end shamefully by the flesh. Indolent labourers ! who, having taken up the plough, forsake the householder's field, because it appears over-run with briars. Dastardly soldiers ! who, though enrolled under the standard of the cross, give up your arms so tamely. The Son of God already disowns you for his children, whatever degree of zeal you may have testified at first. For he alone, he says, shall be saved, who shall have persevered to the end ; and they solely must expect the crown of life, who shall have been faithful to the conclusion.

But what principally should make such persons tremble, as desert the service of God, is that one of the chief effects of inconstancy in virtue is not only to obstruct the facility of repentance, but also
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to augment it's difficulties. In fact, every sinner finds many impediments, that are almost insurmountable, when he labours at his conversion: the abyss of his conscience, which he must fathom; the impetuosity of his passions, which he must subdue; the wrath of a God, whom he must appease. Now all these obstacles, which are capable of deterring other offenders from a change of life, are much more unconquerable, in regard to those, that are of a wavering and uncertain mind. Into what a frightful detail might I not here enter, brethren, did time permit it? But I choose rather, for your instruction, to make use of what remains to shew you briefly the measures, you must resort to, in order to be faithful to the Lord, and to serve him with perseverance.

The first of these is to consider what you are. You are Christians, i. e. children of God, members and brothers of Jesus Christ. Know your dignity therefore; apply yourselves seriously to support this august character, and take care never to degenerate from it.

How many actions do you every day perform, dear people, that would be highly agreeable to the Deity, were you but solicitous to refer them to him? Your hard and laborious work, your want of rest, the contradictions you daily meet
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with &c. Scarce do the rigours of the most austere religious orders exceed the hardships, which some of you are obliged to undergo to obtain a livelihood. Wherefore then will you lose the fruit of so many labours? Ah! Christians; would you but accustom yourselves to think of God, and act for him, how happy might you be? You would work out your salvation quietly and easily; you would persevere in righteousness, and carry with you to the tribunal of God a treasure of good works. To think of the Lord therefore, and to act for him is a second help.

Finally, a third, and the last measure I propose to you, is to avoid the fellowship of the wicked, and all evil communication. This I have already often hinted at; and to speak the truth, it is a point, that cannot too frequently be inculcated; as, in general, bad company is the cause of your being so neglectful of your duties, and the source of many crimes, into which you are imprudently betrayed. But know that you should look upon such people as your avowed and certain enemies, and that there is nothing more dangerous to you than acquaintances of this kind. Take up therefore to day, my friends, the resolution to persist in virtue. Be convinced that on this per-

perseverance, as I cannot too often inculcate, your eternity depends. Make use of the numerous means, which are given you for this purpose. Be faithful to God, and God will be faithful to you.

Ye penitent souls! it is to you, that I address myself, in concluding this discourse. Frame to yourselves a just idea of what you have to do, to persevere steadily in the grace, conferred upon you. You have perhaps relinquished the occasions of your sins; if so, you have done a great deal; but this is not yet all. You must expose yourselves to them no more; and if unfortunately they occur, you must resist them. You have chosen the path of justice; this is much; but it is not still enough. You must run on in it, and run in such a manner that, like the Apostle, you may reach the goal. And as to the rest, be not dejected at that continual progress in virtue, which the gospel and your God require of you. The most difficult part is over with you, that are converted. The road to heaven is narrow; but to whom? To those who enter it with reluctance. It is wide and spacious to such, as have already made some progress in it. The yoke of Christ is heavy; but to whom? To them, that are beginning to take it up. It is light and pleasant

pleasant to such as carry it resolutely. Be not disheartened then, Christians. There is an art in mollifying the rigours, to which a perseverance in piety subjects us. And this art is that, which St. Paul made such successful use of; viz. to keep our eyes fixed on the end of our career, and to have ever in view our divine model Jesus Christ, his example, his assistance and his promises. Let these considerations animate us to a steady and faithful perseverance here on earth; as the only means of being hereafter crowned in heaven; to which happy term I entreat the Almighty Being to conduct us. Amen.

T H E
FOURTEENTH SUNDAY
After P E N T E C O S T.

On P R O V I D E N C E.

I SAY TO YOU BE NOT SOLICITOUS FOR YOUR LIFE, WHAT YOU SHALL EAT; NOR FOR YOUR BODY, WHAT YOU SHALL PUT ON. FOR YOUR FATHER KNOWETH THAT YOU HAVE NEED OF ALL THESE THINGS. Matt. vi, 25 and 32.

THE design of the Son of God, Christians, in the lesson here laid before us, is to root out of our hearts that anxiety and solicitude for the things of life, which engross the greatest part of mankind. To comprehend his meaning you must know that the Pharisees, at whom he here particularly points, attributed all events to

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face. They depended wholly on themselves, allowing nothing to providence, or that supernatural agency, which directs the universe. But at the same time, I desire you to remark, my friends, that our Redeemer, in enforcing the necessity of trusting to providence, does not intend to inspire us with a rash and presumptuous confidence, which would persuade us to live in idleness, and expect our support from above. Let us enter into the views of our Saviour, and make this consoling inference; that if our heavenly Father furnishes a livelihood for the very birds; he will at least do as much for us: that if they find a maintenance who are unable to work; we, on whom this bountiful God has bestowed both the ability of working, and the hopes of enjoying the fruit of our labours, have no occasion to apprehend the supply of our necessities.

And here, dear people, let me ask you; is this the idea you have formed of the goodness of the Deity? Your wants are all open to him; *for your heavenly Father knoweth that you have need of all these things.* Can he then forget you, and suffer you to languish? Or if he does permit it, is it not for your advantage? Were we but careful to consider God in the light we ought; to live under the guidance of his providence, as children under
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the government of their parents, only solicitous to please him, how solid and permanent would our happiness be ?

It would give me therefore the greatest satisfaction to infuse into your minds a reasonable and christian way of thinking on this subject of the divine providence. And, to endeavour to effect it, I will at present call your attention, brethren, to two simple propositions, which shall make the plan of this discourse. First, we must confide in providence. Secondly, we must submit to providence. But to proceed in a regular form, let us first make application to the God of mercy for his assistance, through the mediation of his beloved Son.

When I say that we should confide in providence, I do not speak of that blind and mistaken confidence, whose tendency is to prevent us from labouring for the preservation of our being. No; an industrious application to the affairs of life is but reasonable and just. To act otherwise, would be to tempt God. What I condemn is that diffident and timid forecast; which depends more upon itself and it's own exertions than on heaven. Now, I say that this distrust is unworthy of a Christian, for these two reasons: first, because it
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is injurious to Providence; and secondly, because avidity and worldly greediness is it's source.

No wonder that the heathens, who were either ignorant of the Divinity, or, at best, had but imperfect notions of him, should be wholly taken up with the concerns of this world; because their views went no further. Deprived of the light of truth, enveloped with the gloom of idolatry, they knew not that Sovereign Providence, which governs human affairs, and directs them with infinite wisdom.

But for you, dear Christians, and myself, who each of us confess a benevolent and supernatural agency, watchful for our protection, and attentive to our wants; for us, I say, to be so anxious, would it not be to act against our conscience and give the lie to our faith? This is what Christ would have us to understand, when he says; *Be not solicitous, saying, what shall we eat, or wherewith shall we be clothed, as the heathens say; for your Father knoweth that you have need of all these things.* Matt. vi, 32. What more can be desired, my friends, to calm your anxiety and remove your diffidence, than the sole conviction, which we have, or ought to have, of being in the hands of a God: i. e. of a being, whose attention is sufficiently awakened to be sensible of our wants: whose

prudence is sufficiently enlightened to provide for our necessities; whose kindness is so beneficent as not to leave us in distress; whose care is so extensive as to watch over each part of his creation, to support and to preserve it: in the hands of a liberal God, *who clothes the grass of the field* with more beauty, than even *Solomon* was arrayed with *in all his glory*? How can you imagine, brethren, that a God like ours; vested with such attributes, can forsake and abandon man, the most noble of his works? In effect, was it not for him he commanded the earth to bring forth her fruits? Was it not for him he enjoined the seasons their successive order? And if this God of bounty and munificence seems at any time to forget us, let us blame ourselves alone, who have previously forgot him. Let us but be faithful to him, and we may be confident of always finding in him an assured resource. *Seek first the kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added to you.* Ib. 33.

To be solidly convinced of this animating truth, open the sacred volumes. The manna falls from heaven for the sustenance of the Israelites. David, pressed by hunger, has recourse to the high Priest, who gives him the loaves of proposition, or the sanctified bread. The oil and flower are increased in the charitable hands of the widow of Sarepta.

repta. The dejected Elias falls asleep under a tree, and upon awakening, is comforted with the sight of a loaf, miraculously conveyed to him. All these are the wonders of Providence: wonders, which are often renewed, though not so visibly, in favour of such of God's servants, as cordially repose their whole confidence in him.

And as for you, my dear people, who sometimes complain of and are discontented with Providence, would you know the reason why your undertakings miscarry? Because you diffide in the divine protection, and act as if there was no such thing. You think to secure and protect yourselves from danger by the precautions, you make use of. But rather dread lest this same Providence, which you insult so daringly, should sport with your designs, and make a jest of your false wisdom. Abandoned to disquiet, tormented by the fear of losing what you already possess, and by the desire of obtaining that which is not yet yours, you shall drag on your days in trouble and alarms. The projects, you have formed, shall surely come to nothing. You shall hoard up, and God shall dissipate. You shall sow, and God shall destroy. It is thus, O Lord! thou treatest those, who distrust thy direction; and who, under the pretence of providing for their wants, seek only to please and satisfy their

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avarice.

avarice. For there is no doubt, my friends, but this excessive anxiety is not only injurious to the Lord, but that it is founded moreover on avidity the greediness of a worldly spirit.

Nothing more specious, than the pretexts alleged to authorize these distrusts, and palliate our avarice. It is allowed indeed, on all sides that, in our researches, salvation should hold the first place. But, after all, we must live, you say ; we are incumbered with large families, and they must be provided for. So far is just and equitable. But to take oblique and indirect ways to obtain your ends, brethren, is what I condemn : this is what you try to justify : this is what avarice prompts you to regard as innocent, But two short reflections, Christians, will fully disabuse you. The first will shew that you pursue your temporal welfare with much more eagerness, than your eternal ; and second, that, in your endeavours to gain a livelihood, you do not confine yourselves to what is merely necessary.

What is it then to act upon a principle of avidity and the greedy spirit of the world ? It is to subvert the order established by God. It is to love the creature more than the Creator. It is to prefer earth to heaven, and time to eternity. Now, are not these your sentiments ? Does not the ardour

dour, you betray in quest of temporal things, plainly indicate that you give them the preference to those of futurity? You have long since been admonished to exert yourselves in mastering those habits of drinking, swearing, impurity &c, that lord it over you. Involved as you are in the concerns of life, you pay but little attention to such remonstrances at present? We will think, you say, of salvation, when we shall have made ourselves comfortable. But permit me to ask you, dear people; if the application which you give to the world, was nothing more than reasonable, would it influence you so far, as to make you insensible to the interests of heaven? It is lawful, I agree with you, to make a due provision for yourselves and families. But, is it lawful to devote your time exclusively to such employments? Is it lawful to be so alive to the acquisition, or to the loss of temporal goods; and so callous, so dead, to the loss of salvation and of your souls?

Alas! my friends, how differently does the serious Christian think and act in this respect? Conscious of the dignity of his origin, and the excellence of his last end; convinced of the uncertainty of his abode in this world; all his desires tend to heaven: and, whenever necessity calls his thoughts down to the earth, his tranquillity is in

no degree impaired. He goes on without disturbance, without emotion; because his views are regulated by reason and by faith. He demands of God nothing more than what the gospel terms his daily bread; and if he endeavours to screen himself from the rude attacks of poverty, he dreads still more the gilded shafts of opulence.

Are these your dispositions, Christians? Can you affirm that by your anxious solicitude, by that continual stir, in which you live, you mean nothing more than to procure what is simply necessary? But what are your ideas in this regard? To consult the gospel on this point, necessities are confined to very narrow limits. If you have food and raiment, be contented, says St. Paul. To provide therefore for the wants of nature, to live suitably, and in proportion to circumstances is all that can be deemed necessary in the opinion of the sacred writings.

Examine then impartially if the extent of your designs and projects goes no farther than to acquire bare necessities. If it does, you have every reason to apprehend. For a similar fate will attend the wealth, which you hoard up beyond the calls of necessity, as befel the manna of those rapacious Israelites, who gathered beyond the appointed measure: i. e. the worms destroyed it. In like manner,

ner, if avidity directs you in the pursuit of riches here, fear least they be made hereafter subject of your reprobation: or, at least, lest what you have treasured up with so much trouble, be suddenly and effectually dispersed. But to confide in Providence is not enough; a good Christian must be submissive and obedient to it's ordinances.

Nothing is more equitable, and nothing more uncommon also, than a christian submission to the lovely will of Providence. St. Augustin supplies us with an excellent ground for our behaviour in this regard. On one side, he says, consider the majesty of his Deity, and on the other, your own weakness. He is all-powerful, should we say; and we are infirmity itself. It is but reasonable therefore that we should bow respectfully to his designs. In a word, it is just that we should obey the ordinances of Providence; it is advantageous and beneficial.

Were we to reflect attentively on the bonds, that unite the creature to the Creator: that he is our master, and we his servants; he our king, and we his subjects; he our father and we his children; we should quickly become sensible how just it is to obey him. I say more, we should comprehend that *since all things*, as the scripture testifies, *are subjected to his power, no one*
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can resist his will. Esth. 13, 9. The result of which, dear people, is that necessity compels us to submit to the choice of heaven. For, on which ever side we turn ourselves, it is certain that God's commands will ever be accomplished, and that we must obey his injunctions, either willingly or with reluctance. If we join in with them readily, we comply with our duty, in doing what we ought. If we resist them, says St. Augustin, our very resistance fulfills his orders.

This maxim established, may I not safely call it a proof of good sense to acquiesce in the designs of Providence? For, let man do what he will, God is his master. Let him repine, let him fret, let him vent his passion, as he pleases, the resolves of heaven shall be completed in spite of all his efforts. St. Chrysostom compares such, as murmur at the commands of the Deity, to the waves of the boisterous sea. We often behold, he says, that impetuous element raising itself against heaven, but always unsuccessfully. It is obliged to stop at it's awful voice; it must obey. *Hitherto thou shalt come, and shalt go no further.* Job. xxxviii, 11.

And surely, Christians, if even insensible creatures confess the dominion and obey faithfully the commands of the universal Creator; if the
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sun remains immoveable in the place first assigned to it; if the planets never deviate from the track pointed out to them; shall man alone rebel against his Sovereign and Maker? Shall the sole use, he makes of his reason, be to distinguish himself by his disobedience? Let us ever keep in mind, my brethren, that this glorious character has been given us only to do homage to the Lord, our God; to render our services more worthy of him, and our submission more meritorious; to adore that supreme intelligence, which governs us, and directs all nature.

Thus dear friends, to revolt against the orders of the divine superintendence; to make no other use of the light of reason, than to censure it's conduct and oppose it's decrees, is to abuse God's gifts; it is to turn his blessing upon himself; it is to be wanting in the most essential duty of the creature to it's Creator. For know that it is the privilege of God alone to have a will of his own, says St. Anselm; because he alone is self-existent and independent. But for us limited and helpless beings, the only use we can pretend to make of our will, is to submit it to that of heaven.

Yes, my God! I here confess that whatever I have is thine, and thou canst dispose of it as thou

thou pleasest. I fear neither indigence, nor affliction. All I dread is to disobey thy ordinances. Every state of life will please me, if thy hand does but place me in it. Nature, doubtless, will be uneasy, and break forth, in defiance of me, into murmurs and complaints; but I disclaim them beforehand. I only ask of thee, my God! that *thy will may be done, and not mine*. Luke xxii, 42.; for I know that such were the sentiments, by which thy Saints of both the Old and New Testament were actuated.

It was this spirit of submission that supported Jacob in his exile; Joseph in his fetters, and Moses, amidst the clamours of a seditious and rebellious people. It was this that prevailed on David to relinquish his throne at the first intimation from the Lord; that rendered Job a model of the most heroic patience, under the severest trials. Animated with this spirit, the Apostles and the primitive believers remained firm, and inviolably attached to God in dangers, in prisons, in all the vicissitudes of fortune. In every event they confessed the finger of the Deity; taking occasion from adversity, as well as from prosperity, to glorify and honour him. A disposition, which is at once reasonable, necessary, and founded on the sovereign dominion of the Lord

Lord and our entire dependence on him; and a disposition, I moreover add, of the utmost utility in our present state; since this alone can secure to us tranquillity and peace amidst the evils, that surround us.

Would you know then, Christians, the advantages, that attend the resignation of ourselves to Providence? It is to exonerate our minds of that weight of solicitude for our interests, which usually oppresses them: it is to get rid of those anxious inquietudes, that follow upon the heels of human prudence: it is to forget ourselves entirely, in order to depend wholly on the wisdom, the goodness and the power of a God. The man, who thus unloads himself, as I may say, of his own conduct, reaches the goal of happiness without any difficulty, and may confidently sing with David; I am under the protection of the Lord, what shall I be afraid of? I am poor indeed and destitute; but the Lord governs me; he himself undertakes to supply my wants, and nothing, except sin, can befall me, without his express command. What a fund of comfort do I not find in the conduct of this heavenly Providence with regard to it's servants? How sweetly does the Deity dispose every thing for his glory and my salvation! For *to them, that love God*, and are submissive

missive to his orders, *all things work together for their good* and real welfare. Rom. viii, 28.

Hence it is evident that the most sure method of becoming happy is to submit. God is power itself; *he does whatever he pleases in heaven and on earth*. Ps. ciii. Our inclinations are in his hands, and he models them as he likes; and the means, we sometimes dare to use against him, are frequently the instruments, he employs, whereby to effect his eternal purposes.

Thus the brothers of Joseph contributed to his elevation, by the very means which they made use of for his ruin. Thus Amon was caught in the snares, that he had intended for Mardochee. Thus Saul, in persecuting David, whom the Lord had destined for his successor, lost his crown, and was compelled to leave it to the person, who, of all mankind, was the most odious to him. Thus the perfidy of Judas, the jealousy of the Pharisees, the ungrateful cruelty of the Jews conspired to the grand work of our redemption, and to the accomplishment of those mysteries, that had remained in darkness from the date of time. Thus the wicked, in spite of themselves, enter daily into the views of heaven. For they serve, says St. Augustin, to exercise the virtues of the just, and

and to give them an opportunity of meriting that wreath of glory, which the hand of God has prepared for them.

Neither is this all, my friends. Peace and tranquillity are the happy consequences of this obedience to the decrees of Providence. Neither sufferings, contradictions, nor any thing of the kind can shake the submissive Christian, who reposes entirely on the guidance of his Maker. Does some unforeseen accident reduce him to a state of indigence? He cries out with the holy Job; *the Lord gave me what I had, and the Lord hath taken away; as it hath pleased the Lord so is it done; blessed be his name.* Job. i, 21. Does an enemy take advantage of his disgrace to insult, and load him with the blackest calumnies? He imitates the meekness of David, in regard to Semei, saying with him; *let him alone, that he may curse, as the Lord hath bidden him: perhaps the Lord may look upon my affliction, and may render me good for the cursing of this day.* 2 Kings, xvi, 11.

Immortal thanks, he exclaims, be given to this all-wise Providence, for having humbled and afflicted me; because I am thereby reduced to a situation, that affords me a sure and easy opportunity of effecting my salvation; a situation, in which I
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am blessed with the possession of true peace, and in which I find such powerful motives to be sober, humble and penitent; to detach myself from inconstant and perishable creatures, and to unite myself to thee, my Sovereign good! who neither willest nor canst forsake me. Such, my dear people, are the solid principles, by which both you and I should endeavour to be actuated: principles, that should engage us to adore the designs of Providence on all occasions; even on those, in which it looks the most unfavourably upon us. Never therefore, I beseech you, lose sight of the two great objects, which I have on this occasion held up to your view: first, that we ought to place our whole confidence in Providence: secondly, that we are bound implicitly to resign ourselves to it's direction.

Yes, O God? convinced of the truth of these important lessons, we resolve to pay a proper attention to them in future. We will henceforth submit to whatever it shall please thee to ordain. Without neglecting the means, which thou permittest us to use for the success of our lawful projects, we still trust wholly and quietly for the event of every thing to thee. Let us all, my brethen, return thanks to this amiable Providence,

dence, which we have all experienced. Let us bless it equally in prosperity and adversity: in prosperity, by receiving the good things, it sends us, with acknowledgment and gratitude: in adversity, by supporting the evils of life with resignation and patience. Let it be our constant prayer that the will of God may ever be done in us, and accomplished both on earth and in heaven: on earth by our sanctification; and in heaven by our establishment in the possession of endless happiness. Amen.

T H E
FIFTEENTH SUNDAY
After P E N T E C O S T.

On the REMEMBRANCE of DEATH.

BEHOLD A DEAD MAN WAS CARRIED OUT, THE
ONLY SON OF HIS MOTHER.

Luke, vii, 12.

THE son of this afflicted widow, whom Christ, by an effect of his power, restores to her pious arms, is an admonition, he gives us, that being formed of dust, also the day will come, when like him, we must return to our parent earth. *It is appointed for all men once to die.* Heb. ix, 27.

But, if there be nothing more certain than that we must die; so neither is there any thing more uncertain

uncertain than the time when, the place where, the manner how.

Is it not astonishing then, Christians, that, convinced of these two points, we should reflect on them so little; and that the greater part of mankind should be so frequently surprized by the approach of this last moment? If the Lord, says St. Hilarius, conceals from us the knowledge of the day of our death, it is with the view to remove that pernicious security, which this knowledge would create; and that, being alarmed by this continual incertitude, we may be solicitous to prepare ourselves, and anticipate, by a strict vigilance, an event, the effect of which is as sure, as the time of it is uncertain. Let us frequently, my dear friends, let us attentively ponder these truths, on which our eternity depends. Let us often think of death; the recollection of which, says the scripture, is our most sure preservative against sin. That we must die is indubitable. To die well is what you hope for: to be prepared for it is what you neglect. But the latter, nevertheless, is the natural consequence, you should draw from the certainty of death, and from the hopes, you entertain. Now, this preparation consists in two things. First, in having the remembrance of death ever present to our eyes,

Secondly, in regulating the whole tenour of our conduct by it. Such is the division I propose to make of this important subject; after a petition, as usual, to the source of divine information.

It is not without reason the Church reminds us, at the commencement of Lent, of our mean extraction and frail mortality. But it is incomprehensible, dear people, that the generality of you, blind to your true interests, should lose one of the most efficacious of all means to ensure your salvation, by disregarding her advice. Whence the cause then of the misconduct of most people on this essential article? First, they reject the thoughts of death, as disagreeable; for which reason they endeavour to keep every idea of it at a distance. Secondly, as they are ignorant of the utility of this remembrance, they imagine it will be enough to think of death when it calls upon them. Thirdly, they look upon it as impracticable, to turn this reflection to any profit amidst the variety of cares, that constantly engross them. Let us try to reform and rectify these errors.

And first, brethren, I agree with you that the notion of death is the parent of anxiety. I own that this idea, in some degree, disquiets almost every one; and makes deep impressions, not only on sinners, rivetted to the goods of the earth; but
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even on those virtuous souls, whom faith has already weaned from these sublunary things. I do not undertake then to cure you of all fears upon this article. For, besides that I cannot suppose it would be an easy matter so to do, I am persuaded this apprehension may contribute to your welfare.

To be satisfied of this, it suffices for you to know that the fear of death, is incident to all men, in proportion as they more or less love the life, of which it deprives them. The very Saints feel it. Nay, Jesus Christ himself, our sovereign model, is struck with this apprehension. To teach such, as are agitated by it, that it is not criminal in itself; but that it may be available to the work of salvation. Wherefore, Christians, viewing death in this light, so far from rejecting the idea of it, as disagreeable; we should cherish it, and manage it with prudence, on account of the advantages, with which it may be attended.

For dear people, *dust you are, and into dust you must return.* Reject the thoughts of death, if you please; remove them from you as far as possible, still you cannot hinder it from coming, nor retard it's approach. Like passengers in a ship, who are perpetually carried on by it's progressive motion, however insensible of it they may be, we advance towards our end without intermission.

Time, which passes equally in sleep as in work, bears us imperceptibly towards our grave; and, whether we reflect upon it or not, we arrive at our final term. In vain therefore we should say, to suppress the remembrance of death, when the stroke of it is inevitable.

Nevertheless, my friends, remark that death, altogether unavoidable and imperious, as it is, neither does, nor can extend it's power over the whole man. One half of him must die; but the other is immortal. To see the care you take of the two different parts, of which you are composed, one would imagine the soul was to perish and not the body. Ah! my brethren, open your eyes to such a gross deception. The body must die, in spite of all your sollicitude; and the soul, which by your sins you have so often murdered and assassinated; this soul, disfigured by your crimes, is destined by it's maker to live for ever: may he grant in a state of happiness, and that you prove not such enemies to it, as to make it miserable for eternity. Be not then so ingenious to your own destruction. To what purpose to shut your eyes to the thoughts of death, when it must inevitably overtake you?

But in rejecting this idea, you say, I avoid a mortification, that breaks in upon my rest. To this I answer

swer first, that we cannot remove it so effectually but it will occur, and, in spite of us, imbitter our pleasures. Do we not daily almost see or hear of the death of some acquaintance? Recollect how many have been cut off in the space of the last twelve months, and how many may follow in the course of twelve months more. Secondly, if you look at your dissolution with the eye of faith, you will find a thousand advantages in the uneasiness, it gives you. For as this uneasiness, proceeds from the fear of death; and as death is natural in it's principle; every time a Christian, struck with this apprehension, accepts of death in submission to the orders of God, he dies, as we may say; and thus multiplies the sacrifice of his life, which he can only make once. Thirdly, after all, we become habituated to the thoughts of death, and it's horrors wear away. Provided only we view it in a christian light; and that we never look at it, without casting our eyes at the same time on that eternal life, which succeeds it. By which means, the dread that troubled us, being qualified by the hopes that support us, we shall find no more of this apprehension, that what is requisite to keep us in that state of watchfulness, which our Saviour enjoins us so strictly.

Be not deceived, my friends; for on this important matter, we can be deceived no more than once. It is not a time to think of death when we have but an instant to live. How much is it to be feared that the person, who, in the time of health, shall have neglected the precautions requisite to enable him to die well, will expire in very different dispositions? In fact, how to become equal on a sudden to an emergency, that was at all times fraught with difficulty, and in regard to which we never gave ourselves any concern? But the oracle of God, which is clear on this head; the divine justice, of which we every day see or hear so many formidable instances; and our own experience are so many convictions, that, without an extraordinary interposition of heaven, he who shall have perpetually delayed to prepare himself for death, will not die in the dispositions requisite to be saved; and, of consequence, that it is the height of folly to postpone the care of thinking of death, until it comes with all its terrors.

And whence proceeds your error, brethren? Because perhaps you imagine that it is an easy thing to die in the dispositions of the just, and that a good death is the work of no more than a few moments. But be not so imposed upon. What! do
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you think it dying well of course to expire after making a general confession, and receiving the rights of the Church? Was this all, how many might flatter themselves with the hopes of a happy death? But alas! how many are now burning, and shall burn for eternity in hell, who have had all these helps? Appearances may be in their favour; but appearances are not sufficient. What then is it to die well? I will tell you, dear people, briefly. It is to die clear of sin, and all attachment to it. It is to die, after having effaced, by a painful and bitter repentance, all the sins of our youth, all the irregularities of our lives. It is to die, filled with a lively faith, an invincible hope, a love of God, that surpasses every other affection, and a charity towards our neighbour, that equals the love, we bear to ourselves. Now, is all this, I ask, the work of an instant? Or will it be time enough to think of death, when it shall stare us in the face? No, a Christian should never drop this thought. Death should be always present to him; and that oracle of St. Paul, *I die daily*, 1 Cor. xv, 31, should be his motto.

But how can we possibly have this remembrance ever in our mind, amidst the hurry of our state of life? We must relinquish every thing, and hide ourselves in a desert, to look at nothing but our
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coffins. I will not dissemble, Christians; and I confess they are the happiest, who, wholly occupied with the thoughts of death, give all their time, of consequence, to the care of their salvation. Nor is it less true that, in defiance of business, we may make a solitude for ourselves, in our interior; where sometimes we may find leisure to reflect on our last end.

Besides, dear friends, to think of death is nothing very difficult. Whichever way we turn our eyes, it presents itself. Our frequent prayers for our departed brethren; the burials, that so often meet our sight; the piles of bones, the Church-yard exhibits; the graves, over which we walk, are not these so many objects, that should remind us of our mortality?

Do you desire then to learn the art of uniting the thoughts of death with the various functions of your state? Recollect what I have already said; that a Christian, in this life, is like a person in a ship. The vessel being compelled to lay to, the passenger makes use of the opportunity to go on shore; he does not stray far; and for fear of being left behind, keeps a sharp look out, lest perhaps they give him the slip and sail without him. It is in this manner, brethren, that we should act. Our life is but a passage; our destination the port of happiness,

happinefs. Many articles fill up our time, during the voyage; and it would assuredly be wrong to fit down idly and do nothing. But we must remember that God is the pilot, who can stop us when he pleases. We must from time to time cast our eyes upon the ship; i. e. in the midst of our occupations, we must be mindful of our last end. This, I hope, Christians, may be sufficient to convince you that there is nothing easier, nor more advantageous than to think of death. It remains now to shew how this idea should be applied to the regulation of our lives.

In vain, dear people, to have the remembrance of death ever present, unless you give it a proper influence on your conduct. Nor could I but deem you truly miserable, if, neglecting to think of futurity, you had perpetually before you a dismal reflection, whose only tendency should be to fill you with anxiety. What measures are to be taken then to preclude all risk? First, you must do that, during life, which perhaps you may not have it in your power to do at death. Secondly, you must perform that now, which both necessity and your own wishes will suggest at that awful period. Here is at once matter for your instruction, for your dread and for your comfort, Christians.

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In the first place then, the grand secret of dying well is to do in the time of life what, perchance, we may be incapacitated to do at the hour of death. And this is so much the more necessary, as the first thing, that will occur, when we perceive we are about to die, will be the retrospect of our conduct. We shall then see all our faults; but we shall see them with very different eyes from those, we behold them with at present. Then every thing will appear in it's proper colours. Many objects will strike us then, which now we hardly deign to bestow a thought upon; those falshoods, on which we never reflected; that liberty of giving vent to passion, in which we indulged ourselves; those illicit pleasures, we endeavoured to pass for innocent; those unfair dealings, whereby we had enriched ourselves; and a thousand other sins, on the score of which we were so long hoodwinked.

Wherefore, brethren, to sweeten the bitterness of death, do at present what possibly you may be incapable of doing then. Put your conscience into order, that it may not reproach you at that trying juncture. Make it your rule, if not every day, at least every week, to run over all the thoughts, all the words, all the actions of your life

life. Like the holy Ezechias, recollect the various sins, you may have committed in each period of your age, especially in that of youth. Entreat God to give you a true compunction for them. Say to him with the feelings of the Publican, *O God be merciful to me a sinner.* Luke xviii, 13. Go then, and be washed in the restoring waters of penance; and endeavour by the sincerity of your repentance, to reinstate yourselves in that happy state, in which you were, when regenerated in the font of baptism.

Thus reconciled to your Sovereign good, you may say with St. Peter; *now I know the Lord hath sent his angel, and delivered me out of the band of Satan.* Ac. xii, 11. My only business now is to make use of the time, he is pleased to afford me. Let us therefore strive, my soul! to die like the Saints, although we have lived like sinners: let us receive death from the hands of our Creator, with as much joy, as we received the good things of life. Yes, my God! had I a thousand lives to offer, I would gladly sacrifice them to thee. I submit with all my heart to be bereaved of whatever is dear to me on earth. I submit to the hideous condition, to which my body must be reduced: and as to the pangs, I must then endure, they will only be too light and

and momentary ; since they are the last pledges I can give of my love and wish to please thee. I accept even of those, that are to follow. Glorify thyself, O Lord ! in punishing me, as I have so grievously dishonoured thee. But however criminal I may be, thou hast rescued me from hell. I shall therefore see thee, I shall love thee, I shall enjoy thee eternally. Such is the first step towards a good death. Let us try to take a second, by doing that now, which we must of necessity do then.

St. Ambrose, explaining those words of the Apocalypse, *blessed are the dead, that die in the Lord*, Apoc. xiv, 13, asks if the dead can die again. He elucidates this difficulty by replying that they are already *dead*, whose heart is disengaged from the world ; and that those persons *die truly in the Lord*, who have no tie to the earth. Yes, Christians ; to die without pain, study to detach yourselves, by degrees, from such things, as you affect the most. Thus you will anticipate death, and learn to give up willingly whatever it must inevitably separate you from.

But you will ask me, perhaps, how this disengagement is to be acquired. I answer with the great St. Gregory, that he, who thinks seriously of his dissolution, can have no difficulty to despise

despise the fading pleasures of the world. Think of death, brethren; and this wholesome thought will soon detach you from all, that death itself must ere long deprive you of. Think of death; and you will see that the things, which make life so desirable, must shortly disappear for ever in your regard. Think of death; and you will acknowledge with St. Ambrose, that the concerns of life, which are so fleeting, are undeserving of your care.

These motives, Christians, did you weigh them with attention, would amply suffice to inspire that disengagement, which is the best preparation to an easy and quiet death. But if you want to know the means of acquiring it more fully; retrench all superfluities; frequently offer to God whatever you love most, and beseech him to dispose of it according to his holy will; assure him that you are in readiness to give up every thing for his sake. In a word, whenever he may judge proper to afflict you with any sufferings, sickness and the like, submit patiently to his orders; and, besides performing whatever you must do necessarily at your departure, endeavour also to do that, which in those critical moments you would be glad to have accomplished.

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One of the things, dear people, that will give us the greatest concern at death, will be to see the abuse of our invaluable time; and this we shall regret the more as we shall then be fully conscious that it would have been very easy for us to have laid up treasures for futurity. Then we shall perceive the sense of those words, which the rich man addresses to his faithless steward; the time is over, thou canst *be steward no longer*. Luke, xvi, ii. Who, but those who have experienced it, can comprehend the dismal situation of the dying person, who can produce nothing meritorious for the life he is about to enter on?

To prevent such a heart-felt regret, my friends, let us undertake now, what then we shall so ardently, but so vainly wish to have completed. Have you not yet made choice of a state of life? Choose such a one, as may be no impediment to your salvation. Are you already engaged? Be solicitous to discharge the duties of your calling, and remember that you will never do so many good works during life, as, at the hour of your departure, you will wish to have performed. Say to yourselves at the beginning of each day: what should I be glad to have done, if God was to call upon me to night? Let this salutary reflection accompany all your actions, and strive to perform

perform each of them with that fervour, as if it was to be your last. *Blessed is that servant, whom when the Lord shall come, he shall find so doing.* Matt. xxiv, 46.

Happy then the Christian, whom death shall find thus prepared. How abundantly will the peace and comfort, he shall then experience, requite all his cares? What encomiums will he receive from his divine Master? What treasures, as the reward of his victory? *Amen I say to you, he shall set him over all his goods.* Ib. 47.

Happy again, and eternally happy the Christian, who, often reflecting on his last end, squares his conduct by this remembrance, and empowers himself to behold the approach of death without anxiety; to meet it affectionately, and less as a punishment, than as a passage to immortal happiness. Ah! how comfortable, in the terrour of those alarming moments, to be secure from the agitations of a disordered conscience! Think then of death, dear people, and represent to yourselves the horrors, that will offer to your minds at that decisive period. First, the situation, you will then be in, shall discover the errors, you so long laboured under. Secondly, the irregularities of your past conduct shall crowd in upon you, to make you feel more sensibly the just motives
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of your present fear. Thirdly, your future, but impending doom, will open to you a prospect of eternity, and the punishments that await you. Again then, Christians, think of death. Endeavour to prevent that deplorable surprize, which is never to be retrieved. Let us die to ourselves, by the recollection of death at present, that we may not die eternally hereafter : and let us learn to live as the children of God, the elect of Jesus Christ, destined through his merits, to live for ages without end. Amen.

T H E
SIXTEENTH SUNDAY
After PENTECOST.

On the Observance of Sundays and Holidays.

IS IT LAWFUL TO HEAL ON THE SABBATH
DAY?

Luke, xiv. 3.

STRANGE and extraordinary as this question may appear, it is not without a just cause, however, that our Saviour here proposes it to the decision of the Jewish Elders. For we read that they observed the Sabbath in a style so illiberal, as to refrain from the duties of charity, because the law forbade all servile work; whilst, at the same time, they made no scruple to spend it in

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amusements and the suggestions of pleasure. A false interpretation, exclaims St. Chrysostom; for, by the establishment of the Sabbath, what did God require of them but to abstain from doing evil?

Alas! Christians, if St. Chrysostom bewails so justly the non-observance of the Sabbath, have we less reason to lament the violation of the Sunday; a day consecrated to God, as that was; and on which we are prohibited at present, as well as the Jews were of old, to do any servile work; and are commanded to attend diligently to the worship of our Maker?

To employ the Sundays as we ought, (and the same, I say, of Holidays) we should spend them in avoiding evil, and in the practice of good works. It is true there is not the moment, in which it can be lawful to commit sin; or on which the practice of virtue is not more or less incumbent. But it is equally true, that there are times, on which it is expected of us strictly both to shun the one with more solicitude, and to perform the other with a redoubled fervour.

But who, my brethren, could believe, unless convinced of it by experience, that Christians, as gross and as carnal as the Jews, should think they satisfied this precept by a mere abstinence from manual labour; and that, for the rest, they were

at liberty, to devote these days to idleness? This, no doubt, is the cause of that reflection of St. Chrysostom, respecting the Jewish Sabbath; and of serious people, now a days, concerning the Christian Sunday; viz. that this day, which was appointed to cleanse the soul from her impurities, was chiefly remarkable for the addition of fresh crimes.

Do you desire then, friends, to spend the Sundays and Holidays in a proper manner? Abstain from servile work; and apply to the concerns of heaven. For, if I allow that the sanctification of these days, in part, consists in the cessation from actual labour: it is proper you should know also that it has no less a dependence on the performance of the works of piety. To handle so important a matter with a prospect of success, I propose to shew you, in the first place, that Sundays &c. are destined to the ease of man; and in the second, that they are devoted to the service of the Deity; the direction of whose sacred spirit we will here previously implore.

Exhausted with fatigue and labour, man stands in need of rest: and on no other title can he possibly have any pretensions to it. *In the sweat of thy brow thou shalt eat thy bread*, is the common, general doom of the children of Adam. And

this the Almighty explains in the following clear manner: *six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy works; and the seventh is the day of the Sabbath, that is, of the rest of the Lord, thy God.* Deut. v, 13. Hence then let us examine in what this cessation from work consists; and what is the nature of that rest, which is recommended on these occasions.

In the first place then I say, dear people, that all unnecessary employments must be dropped on such days, as are devoted to God. The reason of which is this. It is the part of every Christian, says St. Paul, to perform all his actions in the name of Jesus Christ; and it would be difficult in the extreme to keep our minds fixed on heaven amidst the distractions of the world. For the hurry of business, to which man is exposed, must unavoidably draw his attention to inferiour and foreign objects. It was expedient therefore and necessary that particular days should be assigned, on which the discharge of spiritual duties should be our only occupation: on which, separated from creatures, we might give ourselves to God: and on which, shutting our ears to the clamours of a noisy, importunate world, we might listen to our Creator in silence and retirement. Admirable invention and contrivance of divine love!

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which, by this suspension and interruption of labour, reminds us of the happy state previous to sin, in which man's only business was to glorify his Maker: a desirable foretaste of the felicity of heaven, where we shall be wholly taken up in singing praises to our God.

It may not be superfluous, Christians, to inform you of the difference, introduced by the law of grace, in the regulation of this precept. The law of Moses, a law of rigour, forbade all servile employments on the days dedicated to God; and this with such a strictness, that the Lord himself condemned a man to death for gathering wood upon the Sabbath day. And the evangelical law, a law of love, which solicits the heart more than the hand, is not behind hand in prohibiting them. However, it is much more indulgent and favourable to our wants. For by servile works it understands those only, whose particular end is gain. Whence it follows, first, that such works, as are directed to the service of religion, are not meant to be comprised within the limits of this restriction. Secondly, that the actions, which the preservation of our own or neighbour's life, or the public welfare of the state may require at our hands, are not upon this list. Thirdly, that the labours and occupations of the mind, provided

they be not bad either in themselves or in their tendency, nor in any shape influenced by mercenary views, are lawful and permitted. Fourthly, that such works, as are needful to obviate any general calamity, are not illicit in their way. Because, although they may suppose a temporary profit; yet, as this is not the end at which they are principally levelled, they are not to be accounted servile.

But, my friends, what, alas! is the consequence of this benevolent indulgence? That the generality conclude they have sanctified the Sunday, because they have not been busied with their usual occupations. However, be not deluded, says St. Augustin. You would do wrong on such days to cultivate your lands: but you would do worse to go into company, and get intoxicated with liquor. How many, nevertheless, do we see, who, though not to be induced to put their hand to any work, yet spend the Sunday in drinking, to the subversion of their morals? Is not the reproach, which St. Augustin makes to the Jews, equally applicable to such Christians? Do not the latter pass the Sunday, as the former did the Sabbath, in the pursuits of criminal luxury? In fact, are not these the fatal days, that fill the resorts of idleness? May I not say more? Is a
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scheme of mischief to be agitated ; an assignation to be given ; the most shameful crimes committed ? Is not Sunday the day usually pitched on and selected for these purposes ? As if done intentionally to sin with greater scandal, and insult the Supreme Being in a more public and notorious manner.

However, there are many, I confess, who are not so irreligious as to profane these sacred times with either labour or debauchery. But the greater part fall into another error, which if not so culpable in itself, is no less hurtful to religion. The obligation of hearing mass they allow to be essential. But, this once complied with, their conscience is at ease, and they suppose they may spend the rest of the day, as idleness may chance to dictate. No, dear people, no ; this is not the repose intended by the institution of the Sunday : a slothful inactivity, which a Christian should be ashamed of. What God and his Church inculcate is a cessation from our temporal concerns, that we may attend to those of eternity. “ Do not imagine, says St. Augustin, you are forbid to labour on the Sunday, that you may have time for idle talk. This relaxation is only granted with a view to afford you leisure to sing the praises of the Lord.” Give not then, as
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St. Paul exhorts you, Christians, give not room to be censured for the bad employment of our solemnities; to be taxed with spending them, I do not now say, in intemperance or lewdness, but in sloth or idle pastimes. For this, St. Augustin continues, would be to celebrate our festivals, as the Jews did their Sabbath; who, while they abstained from working, indulged themselves in an indolence, no less criminal than ridiculous.

Arise then from this languor, brethren; or it will lead you to the gates of death. Take advantage of these sacred days, which God has devoted to his glory, that you might turn them to your salvation. If you know how to profit by them, they are truly that *favourable time*, St. Paul speaks of to the Corinthians. For observe that, in addition to the general graces, each mystery, we commemorate, conveys it's particular blessing. Here Christ is born within us, on the very night we celebrate his birth of the humble Virgin in the stable. There he conducts you to his knowledge, by the light of that novel star, which leads the Sages to his cradle. Now he communicates the merits of his passion to you. Next, he produces in you the glorious fruit of his resurrection. If he raises your hopes to heaven, by ascending thither himself; in the space of ten days, he sends

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his Holy Spirit, and sets your hearts on fire with the flames of his sacred charity.

What inestimable favours, Christians! But God, ever liberal towards those, that serve him with fidelity, does not confine his bounty here. Every Saint, whose feast you keep with a just and due respect, obtains a new grace for you; the martyr his courage; the confessor his faith, and the virgin her chastity. Happy then the persons, who strive to profit by these occasions. Unhappy they, that let them slip without turning them to their benefit. The time will arrive, when, like the slothful Esau, they will come to crave an anticipated blessing. And what answer shall be given to them? Why did you not hasten to receive my benediction? *I have already blessed your brother, and he shall be blessed for evermore.* Gen. xxvii, 33. Such brethren, will be our lot, if we refuse to accept the offers, that are made us on these sacred days. Wherefore, having now seen that they are intended for the ease and repose of man, let me endeavour to convince you, in the next place, that they are appropriated to the service of God.

The principal reason why servile works are prohibited on the Lord's day is our sanctification and spiritual welfare. So that the precept, which enjoins

enjoins them, regards much more the acts of piety to be adopted on such occasions, than the bare suspension of manual labour. But what then are these acts? This I have still to shew you, my friends, to engage you to spend them suitably.

To enter therefore into the views of the divine law in the above ordinance keep in sight this maxim: that the cessation from work is designed to forward us to that spiritual rest, which this commandment chiefly looks at. The repose of the mind, St. Augustin says, the tranquillity of the heart, the observances of religion, these are the points proposed and recommended on the Christian Sabbath.

And what again is the use too generally made of it? Instead of atoning for the sins of the week, may I not repeat with truth that such days are disgraced by the perpetration of the blackest crimes? Is there not then reason to apprehend lest the Deity should vent on us the indignation, he expressed against the Israelites? *My soul hateth*, he says to them, *your new moons and your solemnities: they are become troublesome: I am weary of bearing them.* Is. i. 14. As if he had said; you have converted my feasts into your own; and the days, that should have been dedicated to
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me and to my service, you have impiously devoted to yourselves and to your pleasures. For in what, on the same authority, did the religious worship of the Jews terminate? In a criminal inactivity; and while their bodies were at rest, their souls were tossed about by the contending waves of guilt. Hence they were devoured with animosity and hatred. They oppressed one another, in hopes of profiting by their injustice. The widow and the orphan became a prey to the rapacity of the great. And, what God resented in a far greater degree, immersed as they were in vice, they imagined they should calm his anger by that inaction and listlessness, to which, upon the Sabbath, they adhered with such a nicety. I am willing to believe, brethren, that no one present is so deluded, either by impiety or ignorance, as to suppose he shall find mercy, by resting on the Lord's day. But do you not persuade yourselves you have fulfilled it's obligation by dropping your usual employments? Or, at least, do you not think that the observance of the Sunday consists merely in hearing mass? and that the other works of piety, recommended to your practice on it, are not a matter of precept, but of advice only and counsel?

I am free however to confess, Christians, that
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the sole act of devotion, the Church has ordered for the Sunday, is to assist at the great sacrifice. But one must be wholly unacquainted with her intentions in enjoining so much to presume she requires no more; or to think we have fulfilled this precept by devoting a single hour to it. If the Church goes no further than to command you to hear mass, she thereby plainly insinuates this is not the whole of your duty: and that to spend the remainder of the day in diversions and amusements is to violate and abuse it by a sacrilegious profanation.

But what, say you, are the exercises, we should principally attend to in the discharge of this obligation? We learn them from the Holy Fathers, and particularly St. Augustin, whom I have quoted here so frequently. He tells us that, on the Lord's day, the faithful were present not only, as we are, at the sacrifice of the altar, but that they made it their rule to assist at, and go through with the divine office. This pious custom had then taken such a root, as to pass for a primitive law during the course of several ages: and the same should be observed now-a-days, as far as circumstances will permit. To this you may add, my friends, that you should endeavour on the Sunday to cleanse your souls
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from the rust contracted in the week time : seek to be reconciled to God, and to your neighbour, if at variance : present to the Supreme Being the sacrifice of a contrite heart : regulate your interior : hear with an humble docility the instructions given by your pastor : carry home with you, if I may so express myself, the holy nourishment of God's word, to be your food and support during the remainder of the week : recall to your remembrance the favours received from heaven, and strive to impress on your hearts an indelible sense of gratitude.

On the Sunday then, my dear friends, repair to the house of God, there to render to him your tribute of adoration and thanksgiving ; to acknowledge him for your Creator, to bless him as your Redeemer, and to rejoice in him for having opened to you the grace of his Holy Spirit. What business more important can you have to transact ? If the rest of the week be imbittered by the drudgery of life, why not sweeten the Sunday with the pleasures of devotion ? If you love this God of bounty, as he merits so abundantly, seek him in the abode, which he has chosen for his own. Join with your fellow-members in the assemblies, he has formed. And, if once you be so happy as to *taste how sweet he is*, you will think

think yourselves highly favoured in the opportunity, which is offered you.

But here I must beg leave, Christians, to be indulged in a short digression; and may it help to discountenance an error, which is now a days but too prevalent. As some people, I know not why, seem to suppose they have discharged their duty by their attendance in the morning, it is not unusual to see our chapels almost deserted in the afternoon. But if such persons will reflect, what must they themselves think of it? In what will they spend the rest of the day, to *keep it holily*, as they are commanded? Will they go and lose such advantages in a circle of dissipation? After having sung in the morning the canticles of Sion, will they abandon themselves in the afternoon to the diversions of Babylon? Is not this to expose our festivals to derision and contempt?

But to turn away our eyes from such scandalous profanations, I will resume my discourse, and suggest some further measures to spend the Sunday properly. The example of Jesus Christ may suffice for our direction. We find this divine Saviour employed upon the Sabbath in healing the sick, delivering the oppressed, and comforting the afflicted. And the scandal taken at it

shews

shews the grossness of his enemies, and that they were utterly blind to the secrets of God's wisdom. Christians! let not the conduct of Jews mislead you in this respect. But observe what I now say, that, if any thing can sanctify and make our festivals acceptable, it is the performance of the works of charity. To relieve the distressed, to visit the sick, to edify and encourage them, how immediately adapted are these and the like means to satisfy our obligation of *keeping holy* the Christian Sabbath! For remark this point attentively, brethren; so great a share have the works of charity in the sanctification of our feasts, that, on the most solemn of them all, were the necessities of your neighbour to detain you from the public service, the practice of mercy at home would supply the place of sacrifice. Serious and important truths, my friends, which I conjure you in the name of Christ to engrave deeply on your hearts.

To conclude then, dear people, learn that, as the Sundays and Holidays are designed to give us leisure for the service of our Maker, so they likewise are meant as a time of relaxation: and that, if we refuse to make use of the indulgence they afford, God *swears in his wrath we shall not enter into his rest*. The favours of the Deity,
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on the days consecrated to him; the great advantages to be reaped by a diligent observance of them; every consideration, in short, prompts, us to say with David; *turn my soul, into thy rest for the Lord hath been bountiful to thee.* Pf. cxiv, 7. If, during the course of the week, you have lived for yourselves: if your time has been taken up with the culture of your lands, with the attendance of your shops, with the avocations of your calling; at least, Christians, dedicate the Sundays to him. All times and all days, as David says, are his. But the Sundays he reserves particularly to himself. Do not therefore rob him of a moment of that day, which he has chosen for his own. Give it all to his worship, for which he has marked it out. He commands it, and his commandment is peremptory. Religion exacts it, and she supports her injunction with the authority of the legislature. And shall we have the insolence to bid defiance to them all? No, dear friends, I cannot think it. I hope too well of your piety to harbour the suspicion. Your interest, take notice, is here every way concerned: since from the temporal rest required of you by the observance of this precept, you will be translated to the repose of eternity in the enjoyment of your Sovereign good. Amen.

T H E
SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY
After P E N T E C O S T.

On the PRACTICE of GOOD WORKS.

MASTER, WHICH IS THE GREAT COMMANDMENT
IN THE LAW? MATT. xxii, 36.

NOTHING can shew more clearly the depravity of human nature, than our impatience, as I may call it, when corrupted ourselves, of out-doing others. Such is the case of the Pharisees. Thinking themselves more knowing than the Sadduces, whom Christ had silenced, they hold a meeting to concert the measures the most likely to insnare him. With this view, they depute one
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of their body to propose this question to him, *which is the greatest commandment?* A matter, the merest novice in the institution of the divine law could not possibly have a doubt of.

But, my friends, while we censure the Jews, and profess our faith in Christ, is it not astonishing we should lead lives so inconsistent with our belief, and so devoid of the works of piety, which he every where inculcates? Did we but reflect, what further encouragement could we desire on this head, than the greatness of the reward promised to the doers of good works? However little we may pique ourselves on our sensibility and gratitude, ought not interest at least to make us diligent in the performance of religious acts; when we know that, by doing them, we may pile up treasures for eternity?

This subject of good works therefore is what I here mean to speak upon: to shew the obligation and necessity of doing them, and the manner how to render them available to salvation. And, in order to this, I will limit what I have to say to the two following propositions: first, we must do good works: secondly, we must do them properly. On the one hand, you will see the motives, which evince their necessity. And on the other, the conditions, that should essentially attend them. Au-
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thour of grace, and the source of all our good, infuse into our souls thy heavenly direction, through the merits of our Saviour.

The royal Prophet seems to have traced the whole of our duty in this regard in a brief and concise manner. Be careful, he says, to do no harm; *decline from evil*. Or if you have already been so unfortunate, to make amends for it, *do good*. Pl. xxxvi, 37. To avoid evil then is not sufficient. We must also do good, if we desire to comply with the obligations of our calling. For there are three points to be considered in the character of a Christian; first, the end and design, for which he was created; secondly, the recompense assured him, if he does but live up to it; and thirdly, the punishment, he is threatened with, in case of deviation.

To convince you therefore, brethren, of the necessity of good works, I first recur to the intention of the Deity in making you. Permit me here to put a question to you, which you were instructed in from your infancy. Why did God create you? Will any one reply it was to eat and drink, to amuse and divert himself? If so, to what purpose our rational soul, our understanding, our will. No, you were not made for ends so

base, so ignoble, so vile as these; but to serve your God in this life, and to enjoy him in the next.

And what shall we infer from this? But that all the deliberate actions, which are directed to this end, are laudable and praise-worthy; and, on the other side, that such, as are in no degree referred to it, are defective and vitious. For instance, you work to gain your bread, and support yourselves and families. If this be your aim only, the very savages do as much. But if you work to please your Maker, and serve him in the department his adorable hand has placed you in, your labours will be acceptable and highly meritorious; because agreeable to that end, for which he sent you into the world.

And the following consideration makes still further to your advantage; viz. that, to do good, it is not requisite to be employed about those graver concerns of piety, which demand a close attention. You may convert all your actions, even those, that necessity or habit make familiar, into so many acts of virtue. So that every one may say with truth; I am contented with my condition; for, in regard to futurity, it is as convenient as any other; since it wholly depends on myself to render

render all my actions, however unimportant, acceptable to heaven.

But, alas ! my brethren, where shall we find the persons, that are studious to discharge a duty, so essential to salvation ? Exteriously busy, you do little that has any tendency to the end, for which you were made. For be assured that whatever is not directed to the glory of God, the chief purpose of our creation, is insignificant and useless. It was this made David say, *The Lord hath looked down from heaven on the children of men, to see if there be any that understand, and seek God.* Pf. xiii. 2. And what does he perceive ? *That all are gone aside, and become unprofitable.* Because, although there be a few, that avoid the more enormous crimes, scarcely is there *one*, that truly *doeth good*. For, allowing that you do not blaspheme, that you do not get drunk, that you do not steal, what do you perform for heaven, and the interests of your Maker ? I know you are always occupied. But it is for yourselves alone you work, without any thought or view to God. All your projects centre at home. You think of things no further, than as they regard your own well-being, or the establishment of your families.

Candidly, can you say, that this is the end, for which you received your being ? Informed, as

you are, you cannot ; but must allow it to be no other than to love and serve the Deity ; and that whatever else employs you, whether it be the spade, the desk, or the counter, they are all but so many means to accomplish that great end ; and that you should neither indulge nor retrench them, but as they forward or obstruct your progress in the road to eternal bliss.

When I read in the Gospel that he, who gives a cup of water only to one, that is in want of it, shall be certainly rewarded ; what then may I not expect, I say, from a multiplicity of other works, that are far more important ? If I perform them for God's sake, he will repay me with himself ; *i. e.* with the possession of an infinite and eternal happiness.

Nor fear, dear people, lest your hopes should prove vain and delusive. For remark, whenever the scriptures speak of that felicity, we aspire to, they give it such appellations only, as are calculated to shew the necessity and obligation of good works. First, they call it a reward : *Every man shall receive his reward, according to his labour.* 1 Cor. iii. 8. Secondly, a harvest : *What things a man shall sow, those also shall he reap.* Gal. vi. 8. Thirdly, a crown : *He, that striveth, is not crowned, unless he strive lawfully.* 2 Tim. ii. 5. All expressions, which
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tend to inform us, that if we would be saved, we must work, we must sow, we must fight.

And what, my friends, so likely to stimulate us to labour, as the conviction of our interest? To reflect that every moment may be made worth a whole eternity? That every good action we perform will be rewarded with endless happiness? What more encouraging in the discharge of our various duties, than the assurance that our present diligence will be the measure of our future glory? Shall it be said we do so much to advance and push our fortune, and make light of those concerns, that alone are worth our notice?

But, if we must *work*, to deserve the reward, we must likewise *sow*, to reap the harvest: even sow much, if we hope to be blessed with a plentiful crop. The seed, we scatter, must be proportioned to our wishes and expectations. For, says the Apostle, *He, who soweth sparingly, shall reap sparingly; and he, who soweth in blessings, shall reap of blessings also.* 2 Cor. ix. 6.

You are sensible, I make no doubt, my brethren, that to be entitled to *the reward and harvest*, it is requisite to *work and sow*. But, if you would make sure of *the crown of justice*, you must also *strive*, without intermission. *The kingdom of heaven*, says Christ, *suffereth violence; i. e.* it requires

great exertions; and none, but them that use such exertions, may expect to obtain a seat in it: *the violent bear it away*. Matt. xi. 12. Every claim to eternal happiness was lost by the sin of Adam. Heaven is no longer an inheritance. It is become a conquest, we must fight for. And this, no doubt, is what our Redeemer meant to insinuate by that formidable sentence; *Cast the unprofitable servant into exterior darkness*. Matt. xxv. 30. Where note, he does not say the adulterer, or the thief, but the *unprofitable servant*; who, though he does no great harm, yet performs nothing good either.

Ye Christian hearers! do you not think yourselves concerned in the award of this dreadful sentence? It is an incontestable truth, that we must fight and combat to gain the crown. In what conflicts have you hitherto been engaged? What temptations have you overcome? What victories have you obtained? Is it not true rather that you give way at the first appearance of an assault? Does the devil suggest a bad thought? you consent. Has any one a mind to draw you to the public-house? you yield without resistance. You grant to your passions all they crave: you deny your senses nothing. What prospect of your acquiring a crown then, which is only promised to the brave and active? But if the reward does not
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encourage you ; at least dread the punishment reserved for them, that refuse, and neglect to do good works.

In fact, dear people, we have only to open the book of life to read their condemnation. *Every tree, that bringeth forth not good fruit, shall be cut down, and cast into the fire.* Matt. vii. 19. Where our Saviour does not say that the tree, which *bringeth forth evil fruit*, but the one, which *bringeth forth not good fruit, shall be cut down, &c.* To give us to understand, that to be consigned to the flames of hell, it is sufficient to omit the acts, which religion recommends.

Good works, therefore, are obligatory on all. But they are more especially so on those, who, having sinned and offended God, are bound to satisfy his justice, and make atonement for their faults. Such was the opinion of St. Paul. *As you have made your members serve uncleanness unto iniquity; so now make them serve justice unto your sanctification.* Rom. vi. 19. Who, nevertheless, takes this maxim for his rule of conduct ? Which of you punishes his senses for the many crimes he has been guilty of through their influence and operation ? But think of it as you please ; it is an indisputable obligation for all such, as confess themselves sinners, to do as many good actions as they have
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committed bad ones. So far for the necessity of good works. Let us, in the next place, see the conditions, that are requisite to stamp a value on them.

Whatever fine appearance our works may wear outwardly, they cannot merit the name of good, unless they be vested with the conditions necessary to make them such in reality. But what are these conditions? First, the work must be good in itself. Secondly, the person, who does it, must be in a state of grace. And thirdly, the intention must be pure, and divested of human motives. Happy shall I be, if, in explaining these matters to you, brethren, I can engage you to do all your actions in a truly christian spirit.

The first condition to make an action good, is to perform it in the order, which charity demands. This is the important rule, whereby to sanctify our works. And this same, I assert, is a point, in which we are extremely apt to deceive ourselves. In fact, how many do we see that are performing acts of charity, while they are wanting in those of justice? But this will never do, Christians. There must be an order in our good works: and the dues of justice must take place of the calls of supererogation.

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You shall determine this matter yourselves by examples, that will render my meaning plain and obvious. What, for instance, is my duty in quality of your pastor? It is to labour with application in promoting your real welfare. Such is the work the Lord expects of me in my present situation. Was I to attempt the like elsewhere, from an unwarranted and busy zeal, and, in the mean time, abandon you, who are particularly committed to me, I should not do a good work; because I should neglect the principal task, the Almighty has been pleased to lay upon me.

What are the obligations of a magistrate? Not to be praying all the day long, or visiting the hospitals: but to take up the cause of the oppressed; to employ his authority in checking vice, in preventing mischief; to hinder the opening of public-houses during the time of the divine service, and of the shops on the Lord's day. This is his special charge, and which he cannot neglect to execute without deserving to be censured.

Who can doubt but that private devotions, and a diligent attendance at the sacred service, are among the best of works? Notwithstanding which, was a father, on their account, to omit the instruction of his children; or a mother to be constantly at church, instead of looking to the care of
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her family; it is certain that both these, and all in similar circumstances, would act an improper and wrong part.

I say more, dear people. There are many works of merit, that cease wholly to be such, when superiour to their capacities, that undertake to accomplish them. To apply one's self to the conversion of sinners, to reform their morals, and instruct them in the rules of discipline, are, doubtless, acts of virtue. But when they do not fall within a person's province, they may often be unsuccessful, and even faulty. And this, unquestionably, is the meaning of Solomon, when he warns us not to aim at things above our reach; and of St. Paul, when he tells us not to be wise to a too great degree.

Moreover, if the action itself must be good, so likewise must the person that does it; *i. e.* he must be in a state of grace. This disposition is so essential, that, without it, every action, however perfect otherwise, is void of honour, merit, or reward.

Void of honour, I say; and thus I explain myself. This action, howsoever good it may be supposed, not having the principle of life, which is sanctifying grace, will not be accepted by the Deity. For God does not so much regard the act, as the disposition of him, that performs it. This we see exemplified in the history of Cain and Abel.

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Why does God receive with complacency the oblations of the latter, while he scornfully rejects the sacrifices of the former? Because, replies St. Gregory, he considers less the gift, than the sentiments of the giver. The offerings of Abel did not render him acceptable. On the contrary, the Lord looked favourably on his presents only, because Abel himself was pleasing to him.

Secondly, I say that the best actions lose all their merit, when done in a state of sin. They are like wild plants, that from a want of being grafted, bear only a sour and distasteful fruit. But here, my friends, for fear you should mistake me, I must apprise you, that the works of piety may be considered in a double point of view. Such of them are morally good, as have a lawful and commendable end; although the person, that does them, be not in the habit of grace. But those, and those only, are justly deemed meritorious, which, besides the rectitude of the object and the sanctity of the end, have virtue for their principle, and are performed in a state of righteousness. Whence St. Paul infers, that, as charity is the soul of all good actions, without which they can be of no worth in the sight of the Supreme Being, did we give our possessions to the poor; did we fast every day; did we endure the most rigorous tortures in the cause
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of heaven; in a word, whatever moral virtues we might practise, in a state of mortal sin, they would have no merit in the eyes of God. And were we so unhappy as to die in this condition, he would make no account of them. However, it is also proper you should know, that, at the instant you are reinstated in grace, by a sincere repentance, the good works, you performed before your fall, revive and recover the privileges, they were previously entitled to.

I say, thirdly, that if an action, devoid of grace, which is its principle and life, be without honour and without merit in the sight of God, it must not look for a reward from him: since the recompense, we expect, is due only to desert. We are sometimes inclined to think we have done a great deal in behalf of virtue, because we have performed many actions, that are intrinsically good. We suppose ourselves, like the bishop in the Apocalypse, rich and opulent in merit; while, at the same time, we are reduced to the extremity of indigence. And what is the consequence? But that which daily happens to those stupified people, of whom the Psalmist says, that *they have slept out their sleep, and found nothing in their hands*. Ps. lxxv. 6.

Finally, dear Christians, for a work to be good, the intention in doing it must be properly directed.

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In which regard I do not speak, observe, of such sterile intentions, as, to use a bold expression, may be said to have no aim : but only of those laudable and meritorious views, which in the least, as in the most exalted actions, have God and his glory for their end ; as St. Paul so strongly inculcates in his epistle to the Corinthians. Thus, my friends, if you are temperate and sober, strive so to be, not from the consideration of any human respects, but in compliance with the divine law, which enjoins and exacts it. If you are just and upright in your dealings, seek thereby to fulfil your duty, and not to acquire the name and reputation of honest men. If you work to earn your livelihood, let the motive of your labour be to effect the will of God, and to submit to that awful sentence pronounced on all mankind, *in the sweat of thy brow thou shalt eat thy bread.* Gen. iii. 19. In a word, whatever you do, do it to please God, and advance his glory ; and not to serve yourselves, and gratify your feelings.

Yes, O God ! we will henceforth be solicitous to please thee alone in the good works, which by thy grace, we may be prompted to attempt. We have nothing to give thee but what thou hast first given us ; and, in humbly presenting thee with the sacrifice of our actions, we do no more than

than offer thee thy own gracious gifts. Grant that in all our works then we may have no other view but the propagation of thy honour. In fine, inspire us, we beseech thee, not only to do good works, but to do them in a proper manner, and to refer all the merit and lustre of them to thee. *For not to us, O Lord! not to us, but to thy name be glory given* to an eternity of ages. Amen.

T H E
EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY
After PENTECOST.

O n D E T R A C T I O N .

THE SCRIBES SAID WITHIN THEMSELVES, HE
BLASPHEMETH.

Matt. ix. 3.

THE doctors of the Jewish law, envious at seeing Christ work such miracles, as they were sensible could be the effects of an exalted and superiour virtue only, here accuse him of speaking blasphemy. As if the ease, with which he cures this paralytic, did not sufficiently evince that his power was unlimited. Which of us, then, Christians, can expect to escape detraction, when we

see it point it's arrows at Sanctity itself? No, my friends, we must not look for it. Detraction is now so general, that, in defiance of the most unspotted innocence, all alike are aspersed, without being either conscious of, or in a capacity to redress the evil. It resembles the stone, that shattered the statue, Nebuchadnasser saw in his dream. It flies, it strikes, it breaks every thing to pieces; without discovering the hand, that emits the direful mischief. It wounds by it's silence; it brings death in it's speech; and, although a subject of general complaint, there is perhaps not a vice that prevails so universally. And what is still more astonishing, it seems to affect those the most, whom religion is the most studious to warn of it's malignity: ourselves, I mean, Catholics; who, with anguish I say it, and with no less veracity, are notoriously addicted to it. But, the more general the crime, the more incumbent on God's ministers to attack it with all the vigour his zeal may inspire. This then is the task I here mean to undertake. And to effect it, I will shew, first, that detraction is a source of malediction and wo to all them, that are guilty of it: and secondly, a cause of happiness to such, as are it's objects, and against whom it empties it's poisonous quiver. Spirit of Charity!

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direct us by thy light, and open our hearts to the benevolence of thy doctrine.

To convince you, dear people, that there is not a greater source of malediction than obloquy, the three following reflections will, I hope, be sufficient. First, it renders us the objects of God's hatred. Secondly, it is productive of the most pernicious effects. And thirdly, it is a sin, I will not say irreparable, but of so deep a dye however, as not to be effaced without the utmost exertions. These three heads will shew you of what importance it is to shun the very shadow of this detestable vice.

In the first place, then, I say, my friends, that detraction makes us the objects of the divine abomination. And this, doubtless, on account of it's inherent malignity. Hence, St. Paul asserts, that the detracter shall have no share in the inheritance of Christ. Nor was this crime less condemned by the oracles of the old law, than by those of the new. To be satisfied of which, open the book of Leviticus. There, amidst a variety of other forbidden matters, we read a strict prohibition of calumny and defamation. *Thou shalt not calumniate thy neighbour ; neither shalt thou speak evil of him.* &c. Levit. xix. 13. But, to be more fully convinced how odious this evil makes us in the sight of the Deity, hear what the Holy Ghost himself says upon

the subject. *The whisperer and the double tongue is accursed; for he hath troubled those, that were at peace.* Ecclus. xxviii. 15. Could this God of charity have used a term more expressive of his abhorrence?

But this is not the whole of the matter. Detraction, which makes us odious and detestable to the Almighty, renders us likewise offensive, and execrable to mankind. For what can there be more abominable, than a vice, which spares no one, whether great or little, innocent or guilty, and which too frequently rears it's head against the very altar and it's ministers? What more hateful, than the man, who arrogates the right of aspersing others, as he pleases; who, coward-like, takes advantage of the dark to assassinate them, and stabs them at a time when they are unable to defend themselves? Such is the detracter, Christians.

For which reasons, Solomon represents him as the scourge of the neighbourhood, he lives in. *A man full of tongue, he says, is terrible in his city.* Ecclus. ix. 25. So much the more terrible, as he acts under cover, and spits his venom at the persons, who are the least deserving of it. So much the more terrible, as his tongue, being set on fire by bell, spreads destruction on every quarter. In a word, of all things terrible, the most so; a world
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of iniquity ; James, iii. an abomination to God, and a dread to mankind.

And here, friends, do not flatter yourselves that levity will exculpate you : especially, if the matter of your slander be considerable. The subsequent reasons will fully shew the contrary. First, because the habit of exposing whatever is said or done, of divulging at random the tattle of the day is a habit incompatible with the law of the gospel, which commands every Christian to lead a retired life, to study his heart, and watch the motions of grace. Secondly, is not this very indiscretion, to which you fly for shelter, prohibited by God ; who assures that he, who cannot bridle his tongue, shall fall into many crimes ? *In a multitude of words there shall not want sin.* Prov. x. 19. Thirdly, you cannot be ignorant, on the testimony of Christ, that we must hereafter give an account of every idle word ; *i. e.* of such words, as are neither prompted by faith, nor suggested by reason. What then can we think of obloquy and slander ? Of conversation, that tends to traduce our neighbour's character ? If indiscretion cannot justify such talk as is indifferent, and whose only fault consists, perhaps, in being empty or imprudent, will it excuse defamation, whose effects, you shall now see, are so pernicious and fatal ?

Wherefore, to comprehend, as you ought, the consequences of this crime, observe well the properties, that are inseparable from it. Such then is it's nature, that the same blow, as strikes the person defamed, wounds the detracter himself, and all them, that listen to him. If a man be determined to injure himself, the concern is his own. But to bring ruin on others, and involve them in the same guilt, is peculiar to this vice, and a principal effect of it. For what, says St. Bernard, is the view of the detracter? Is it not to fix an odium on the party traduced, and impress every hearer with an hatred and contempt of him.

Hence, no sooner has the poison of defamation reached our ears, than we begin to despise those, whom we previously esteemed. We judge of their actions, and even of their intentions, on a prejudiced authority; which is rash judgment. We act by the received impression, and treat them accordingly; which is injustice. And what is still more, we become detracters ourselves, by hearkening to the slander, and revealing it to others.

Nor are the effects of this vice less hurtful to the person at whom it's shafts are levelled, in whose breast it undermines the very foundations of charity. For, my brethren, let me ask you, (and I will allow you all the merit you may think yourselves

self possessed of) how must the man feel, that finds himself the victim of the most unjust and base slanders? Although he may otherwise be superiour to their malevolence, at least will he not wish to retaliate, and return obloquy for obloquy?

Again, let the detracter view the mischief he does his injured neighbour, by indulging this fatal liberty; the confusion he entails upon him; the distress into which he plunges him. This person, robbed of his master's good opinion, is removed from an employment, the support of himself and family: that, blasted by the tongue of malice, loses the public credit, on which his prosperity depended. What obstacles did not the calumnies and aspersions of his enemies throw in the way of Christ himself? How many were deterred from owning and believing in him, by the opposition, which they raised to his person and doctrine? And how frequently do the detracters of our own days impede the progress of religion, by their malevolent censures of their pastors and directors? O God! what an abyss! O woful defamation! which spreadest discord so widely, and kindlest animosities, that are perhaps never to be extinguished. For, another peculiar property of this vice is, that the mischief it occasions is not to be done away without the most unutterable difficulty.

And for this, my dear people, reason alone shall be my voucher. They, who heard your slander, imagined you spoke the truth only. How then will you eradicate and rectify their prejudices? And, although you could, your business is not yet finished. The obloquy is spread already to a very great distance. It has passed from your confidants to those, you are unacquainted with, and from these again to others. By what means will you discover all, who have given credit to your words? And was this even possible, are you sure of disabusing them? I say more. Although you were to make a public retraction, and were so happy as to succeed in effacing all bad impressions, still you would fall short of making amends for what you have done. And the reason of it is this. A reputation, that has never been sullied, carries with it a certain candour, which nothing can restore. From the moment a person is censured, although one convince the world of his innocence, there remains a fatal something, that darkens and obscures him. His virtue shines no longer with it's accustomed and wonted lustre; as if guilt and defamation were inseparably connected.

And what is still more dreadful is, that the difficulty of redressing this evil does not exempt you from the obligation. But, you say, we were not
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the authours of it: what we advanced was solely from the voice of common report. Tell me then, brethren, would you allow this excuse to be valid in the mouth of another person: such a one, understand me, as might have belied and slandered you? You repeated the story on the report of others. But it is a sin to give occasion to detraction. It is a sin to listen to it. It is a sin not to check it, if in your power. It is a sin to lend it any sort of countenance. It is a sin not to clear your brother's character when required. It is a sin to divulge his faults to those, that were unconscious of them. And observe attentively, my friends, the last-mentioned sin obliges you to make good the damages occasioned by it. For in detraction, as in theft, the crime is not to be pardoned without the atonement of restitution. But, is it probable I should expose myself, to vindicate a mere acquaintance? It must be done, however. It is but justice you should forfeit your own, for having ruined your neighbour's character. The satisfaction is indispensable, and only proportioned to your sin. Without it, no repentance will be available in the sight of heaven.

How then is it possible, that while detraction is so common, restitution should be so rare? I will appeal to your own experience. In spite of so many

many confessions, in which this article has had it's share always, have you yet made satisfaction to your defamed and injured brother. What then can one say, dear people, but tremble for the detracter? O just, but dreadful avenger of the iniquity of the human heart, who wilt so severely punish those, that refuse to alleviate their neighbour's misery, what torments hast thou in store for such, as, by their defamatory speeches, heap infamy and contempt upon him? If the hard-hearted and pitiless are to be excluded from the arms of mercy, detracting Christians! what will be your fate?

But, my friends, to discharge my duty fully, besides exposing it's malignity, I must supply you with the means of defence against this atrocious and hateful vice: a vice, which the holy Fathers have not scrupled to stigmatize as a mark of reprobation.

How wide would charity reach, and extend it's lovely empire, if, less attentive to the faults of others, we did but strive to amend our own! Hypocrite, says Christ, regard not the mote, that is in thy brother's eye, but the beam, which is in thy own. Let this reproach teach you to mind yourselves alone; and be assured you will
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need no other preservative against the poison of defamation.

Be no less diligent in the use of a second remedy, which is to govern and command your tongue. For that *restless evil*, as St. James terms it, is the origin of all slanders. The Christian's vigilance then in managing it must be proportioned to the immense difficulty of keeping it within bounds.

A third preventive is suggested in the dictates of the wise-man. Have nothing to do he says, *with detractors; for their destruction shall rise suddenly.* Prov. xxiv, 21. Should you be in company with them, that traduce their absent neighbour, impose silence on such rash tongues, as neither respect the law of God, nor pay regard to the bond of union, which he has established among men. If you have not the authority requisite, at least convince them by your deportment that you will not participate in their guilt. In a word, Christians, if you desire to avoid the curses entailed upon detraction, be at all times upon your guard neither to say nor listen to any thing, that may reflect upon the absent. Let the general prevalence of this crime be a motive to redouble your care. Let it's deplorable effects induce you to detest it, and the extreme difficulty
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of repairing them ever impress you with a just abhorrence of it. I will now shew you briefly how detraction may become a source of happiness to such, as it takes aim at in all the wantonness of malice.

And, first, I say, bear it with a Christian spirit, and you will recommend yourselves to your Redeemer, by copying his example. Secondly, bear it without repining, and it will prove an antidote against that pride, which would endanger your safety, did the world speak too well of you. Thirdly bear it with patience, and your patience will prove a supplement to the satisfaction, you owe to the Deity.

In the first place then I say, my brethren, the most certain method of rendering ourselves agreeable to Christ is to receive and bear detraction with his sentiments and spirit. The hatred, the Jews bore him, made him an object of their most bitter rancour. Now if Jesus Christ, the model of innocence, was not secure from the assaults of malice, can his servants expect to be so? Wherefore, to imbolden us against it, he tells us daily, by the voice of his pastors, what he told his Apostles, by his own mouth: esteem yourselves happy, when men defame you: you weep

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at present ; but the hour shall come, in which I will dry up your tears, and change your sorrow into joy. What then have you to complain of, Christians ? But to descend to particulars.

You are traduced, you say ; you are calumniated. Was not your Saviour likewise traduced ? Was he not calumniated ? He delivers the possessed, and the spiteful Pharisee insinuates to the crowd that he works his wonders by the power of Satan ; that he himself is a demoniac, and a Samaritan, void of principle ; that he is an impostor, who boasts of destroying their temple, and rebuilding it in three days. If a God, says St. Gregory, hears unmoved a language so injurious to his Divinity ; he, who could have revenged his cause by the utterance of a single word ; with how much more reason should we, dust and ashes, bear patiently the lessening things, that are sometimes said of us ? You feel, I do not doubt, my friends, the impression, the example of a God ought to make upon your minds. But, O criminal indocility ! It is enough to be informed that you have been mentioned disrespectfully, to irritate your passion beyond the power of control. But, says St. Augustin, think it a snare, the Devil lays to inveigle you. Bear such attacks
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with patience, and you will find in your tranquillity a sure preservative from pride.

Nature has implanted in us a desire of being honoured and esteemed by our fellow-creatures: and if our actions be not levelled immediately at this end, let us own, at least, that we feel a secret pleasure, when applause attends us. With the good opinion of ourselves therefore, which vanity is apt to inspire, if no one contradicts us, how soon are we elated? But let detraction open her lips, and our presumption quickly vanishes. Let her speak, and we are compelled to acknowledge, at least tacitly, that we possessed the phantom of virtue only, when we thought ourselves happy in the acquisition of this best of treasures.

But a still greater advantage, brethren, is to be derived from defamation. We have all of us many sins to be atoned for to the Deity. Satisfaction to his justice is among the principles we are taught: and, according to these same principles, to bear injuries patiently is one of the most efficacious of the means afforded us to supply any such deficiencies.

In this light did David, that man of God, consider things when, supported by faith amidst the calumnies, that were thrown upon him, a fugitive

as he then was, an insolent Semei dares to load him with reproaches and imprecations. How does this hero act, think you? Does he return abuse for abuse? No. He even forbids his friends, those faithful few, that still adhered to him, to interfere, or lay their hands on this rebellious and lawless subject. Hold, he says; let him talk; and know that God himself commissions him to try me. In revenging myself, I should become more culpable even than Semei. Whereas, perhaps, in pardoning him, the Lord may take compassion on me, and bestow a blessing for his curse.

The same has been the practice of the Saints of the law of grace; all of whom have regarded their calumniators and slanderers as instruments in the hands of heaven to purify their virtue. Let their example be our pattern. Thus we shall partake in the benedictions of a God, who only chastises to correct us and to empower us to discharge the debt, we owe to his sovereign justice.

Take up then to day, my friends, an eternal resolution to avoid this odious vice. Keep in view the precept, your Redeemer lays upon you, *to bear with one another's burthens*. For so, says his Apostle, you shall fulfil the law of Christ.
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Gal. vi, 2. Remember these two principles; first, that detraction is a source of wo to those, that incur it's guilt: and secondly, that, if we support it with a christian fortitude, it will crown us with blessings in this life, and with happinefs in the next. Amen.

T H E
NINETEENTH SUNDAY

After PENTECOST.

On the Small Number of the ELECT.

MANY ARE CALLED, BUT FEW ARE CHOSEN.

Matt. xxii. 14.

M*ANY* are called: how merciful! *Few* are chosen: how severe! It is thy grace, O Lord! that calls us all. *Many* are called: a subject of consolation. How then does it happen that Christians make so light of it? *Few* are chosen: a subject of terror. Whence comes it then that sinners reflect on it so little? *Many* are called: i. e. the gates of heaven are shut to no one. *Few* are chosen:

chosen: i. e. if we are not of the small number of the elect, it must be wholly our own fault, and because we wilfully follow the crowd, that wanders from the track of virtue.

Hence let us draw this inference, that to be ranked among the predestinated will depend upon ourselves. The following then, dear people, is the plan of this discourse. First, it is certain that the number of the elect is small: a proposition, that should inspire us with a salutary fear. Secondly, although their number be small, it is in our power to make a part of it: an assertion, that should excite our fervour, and induce us to exert ourselves. Merciful Spirit! who dost compassionate our miseries, soften our obduracy, and impress us with a dread of thy unfathomable judgments.

God alone is acquainted with the number of the elect, and the individuals, that are destined to compose their society. This notwithstanding, I do not think it a want of respect to him to elucidate this mystery: a mystery, he himself seems desirous to reveal, by explaining it so far as to give us to understand, that, if all may be saved, a few only will. And to be satisfied of this, let us attend, first,

to what the scriptures assert; secondly, to what

Christ

Christ teaches; and thirdly, to what reason dictates on this head.

Few are saved, my friends. This is a point, which the scriptures insinuate by many figures of the Old, and by many expressions of the New Testament. For what means that tremendous and universal deluge, in which all nations, all ranks, all flesh, in short, were involved; eight persons excepted, who were preserved in the ark. Sodom and Gomorrah are laid waste by a shower of fire: all the buildings, that adorned them, are reduced to a heap of rubbish: the temples demolished, the inhabitants destroyed: only Lot and three others escape the conflagration, by the guidance of an angel. *Few are saved*. Yes, I repeat this solemn truth. Your fathers, says St. Paul, were all favoured alike: they were all conducted by the same Providence; all guided by the same pillar of fire: they all fought under the same leaders; the same miracles were worked for all of them. Nevertheless, he adds, they did not all please God. For of six hundred thousand souls, that were rescued from Egypt, only Josue and Caleb were introduced into the land of promise. And this, continues the Apostle, was but a type of the fate of Christians. What, alas! the six hundred thousand, that perish in attempting to reach the promised land, were

but an image of ourselves, struggling in this vale of sorrows. Ah! exclaims St. Augustin, if the figure be so ill-handled, what have not the parties represented to apprehend! *Few are saved, dear people, few are saved.*

I confess, Christians, I cannot but shudder when I read what St. Paul affirms in his epistle to the Corinthians. *All run*, he says, but only *one receiveth the prize.* 1 Cor. ix. 24. For observe, he does not here speak of those indolent sluggards, that sleep their time away on the pillow of ease; nor of those obstinate sinners, who, making vice their employment, hourly aggravate their damnation; but of such heroes as behave courageously, and act the part of valiant soldiers. What can he hereby mean to hint to them he writes to; unless it be the obligation of exerting themselves in running, and the apprehension, they ought to have of being left behind? *An incorruptible crown*, he tells them, is waiting for you: run then in such a manner that you may obtain the glorious recompense.

Nor think, brethren, that this race is the trial of a moment; and that, to gain the palm of victory, it is enough to put yourselves in motion. No; do not flatter yourselves so idly. Every kind of running will not bring you to the happy goal.

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The way of running in use with the slothful heart, with the divided heart, with the heart, that to-day moves forward towards virtue, and to-morrow falls back again to vice, will never bring you to it. *Run* then; but *run*, as God exacts, and your interest requires. *Run*; but in the midst of your race fear lest your sinfulness prove your hindrance. Since, to revert to the oracle of St. Paul, of so many, that run, there is hardly one that deserves to be crowned.

Ah! Christians, let us acknowledge that we are little sensible of our dangers; since we are so unsolicitous to guard against them. Unhappy we, to view with the eyes of indifference those sacred and awful principles, that have made the greatest Saints turn pale, and wither with terror. They trembled; and we, after so many falls, continue thoughtless. Sinners by nature, voluntary, malicious, obstinate sinners, we are unconcerned and fearless of our destiny. Is such a delusion credible? Could we think it even possible, did we not behold it daily?

But to incline you still further to lend your attention to this weighty subject, let us hear what he says of it, who was fully sensible of it's difficulties. *Many are called; but few are chosen.* A decisive sentence, and which concerns not only such, as re-

fuse to appear at this feast ; but principally them, that, accepting the invitation, come to it unprepared. Let us apply this to ourselves, and see what we have to expect. Among those, that, like us, are called to the light of truth, all are pre-elected in a marked and special manner, with a kindness, that almost borders on violence and compulsion. And yet, in a people so distinguished, there are but few that correspond in every state and profession. Because, in every state and profession, we listen more to the voice of passion, than to the mandates of duty.

But, however sound the principles may be, that I have here deduced from the sacred writings, I will give you others, that are more within your reach, and which shall force you to allow that the number of the elect among ourselves will be very small. And to prove this, without recurring to authorities, it suffices to compare the Christians of modern date with those of the primitive establishment. We inherit their name ; but do we succeed to their piety ? A short sketch of the leading features of their character will shew whether our hopes of being ranked among the chosen be as well founded as theirs or not.

And first, to instance in that spirit of charity, which made but one heart of them all. Yes, brethren ;

thren; in those days, the person would have been looked upon as a monster, who should have, I do not say, calumniated innocence, but even made too free with his censorious remarks. He would have been an object of detestation and abhorrence, who should have, I do not say, meditated revenge, but harboured the slightest aversion even. See, said the astonished heathen, how they love one another: their philanthropy is without example.

Here, my friends, to shame you, let me ask where shall I now find the marks of this sacred charity, which is the ground-work of our religion? What proofs do you give that you have but one soul, as you are but one body in Christ Jesus? The detail would be too irksome. But turn this matter over impartially in your minds; and see whether, by this rule, salvation is for the greater number. For my part, when I consider the terms of charity, and weigh in the scale of the gospel the reciprocal duties it enjoins, I am convinced the crowd will be damned; because they certainly fall short of complying with it's obligations.

But, as we are now upon instruction, let us carry our researches further. The primitive Christians, solely actuated by the desire of futurity, lived in a perfect disengagement from the world; possessing

things in common, that the poor might find where with to alleviate their misery.

By this second note examine if the number of the chosen be great among yourselves. It is true, you are not required to give up the inheritance of your families. You are, in no shape, blamable for possessing what has been left you. I even grant the wealth, you are masters of, may be made serviceable to your salvation. But for this, my brethren, your minds must be humble, and your hearts detached. Now, is this poverty of spirit, this disengagement of the affections a thing so very usual? Or rather, is it not evident that the infringement of this single article will occasion the loss of thousands?

But the primitive faithful were not content with promoting this lovely union, this amiable charity, this evangelical disinterestedness. They moreover cherished an avowed opposition to the pleasures of life. To be a Christian, in those days, was to lead a life of penance and mortification. To be a Christian, in those days, was to have a fixed and settled station, as I may say, in the receptacles of the criminal. To be a Christian, in those days, was to lay constantly at the mercy of the most inhuman barbarity. The tempest has ceased to rage indeed: but, although the sky be calm, are we in
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similar dispositions? What do I ask? Do not the most trifling contradictions overpower and get the better of us?

Nevertheless, my friends, this is a matter, on which it ill becomes us to be deluded. Study what your religion prescribes; and you will see whether you have reason to expect to be hereafter counted among the predestinated. It requires you to bear a resemblance to Jesus Christ, in whose name you have been baptized; and to evince, by your deportment, that you are truly conformed to him, on which alone your election is founded. Now, in pursuing your usual conduct, with what front can you pretend to salvation, and hope in future to be of the small number of the chosen?

But if this be the case, you say, we may sit down satisfied, and give it up; for *who then can be saved?* Matt. xix. 25. Besides, are we not taught that the last instant of our lives must be the crisis of our doom? This is to say that, to make yourselves easy on the score of your offences, you trust to the resources, which religion offers at the hour of death; to the mercy of the Lord, which is infinite; to the facility of receiving the sacraments; to certain sentiments of repentance, that occur in the last moments. Alas! dear people, if these were sure proofs of a conversion, how many would be saved?

What

What would become of the testimony of your Saviour? You are deceived. Your hopes of dying well, after a continued scene of wickedness, are without foundation; they are groundless, they are unwarranted hopes. Unless one shall have served God faithfully during life, how rare to return to him cordially in the agonies of death!

We may affirm then with assurance that *few will be saved*. So few, says Isaias, that *they shall easily be numbered, and a child shall write them down*. Is. x, 9. Alas! brethren, are we not petrified with dread at this terrifying sentence? The heavens are shut. The abyss is opened. The great as well as the little, *the strong ones of Israel*, go down in crowds. Perhaps I myself, who am here endeavouring to warn you, shall be numbered among the reprobate. O Sovereign being! What will be my fate, and that of my hearers. Our lives must determine it. But my design is to instruct, and not to plunge you into despair. Let us therefore gather the fruits of this discourse, and draw the inferences, that result from it, as I proposed to do in my second part.

Nothing is more certain than that, although the number of the elect be small, we have all a right to hope to be among them, that shall compose it. For this purpose, however we must take
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some prior steps. And what are they? First, to know the road, that conducts to future happiness. Secondly to examine candidly whether we are truly in it or not. Thirdly, to encourage ourselves to walk on boldly in it. Three reflections, brethren, that claim your whole attention.

In the first place then, I say that we must know the road to heaven, and make ourselves acquainted with what may tend to put us out of it. But as Christ alone could teach us, so must he alone be consulted on the present occasion. Now, he explains himself on this matter so clearly and so explicitly, that no understanding whatever can possibly be at a loss. We read that they, who heard him talk upon this subject, took it into their heads to ask him if it was true that so few would be saved. But what answer does he give them? *The gate is narrow; strive then, and do your utmost to enter by it.*

This principle laid down, dear people, it is a mistake to regard salvation as a thing so easy, as not to call for our whole sollicitude. It is a mistake to suppose that a state of indolence and inaction, which leaves us, so to speak, between virtue and vice; that a life, exempt indeed from the grosser crimes, but devoid of good works, can render our election sure. If we pretend to
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be associated to the small number of God's chosen, we must necessarily exert our most strenuous endeavours. *Strive to enter by the narrow gate.*

And do not imagine, friends, that when we exhort you to renounce unlawful pleasures; to avoid such occasions, as draw you into sin; to keep a guard over your passions, and the affections of your heart; do not imagine, I say, the path of virtue offers nothing but briars, without any roses; or that the business of salvation presents only difficulties, without any mixture of comfort. You will find quite the contrary, if you apply to your duty seriously. But otherwise do not hope for it. For God relieves only those, that exhaust themselves in his service. No consolation is to be found, but in the testimony of a good conscience: no real pleasure, but in the midst of labour. Yes, the cross has it's delights. But still it is a cross; and, to belong to Jesus Christ, we must of necessity take it up.

But it is not sufficient to know the road to heaven, nor to be convinced of it's narrowness. We must moreover enter into judgment with ourselves, and seriously inquire if we hitherto have walked in it.

I am sensible that whatever be our state, salvation is always dubious. There is an uncertainty
regard.

regarding it that God only can unfold. And in this he chooses to leave us both to teach us our dependence on him, and to make us watchful over ourselves. This kind of uncertainty is beneficial and necessary. But there is an uncertainty of another sort, which we bring upon ourselves; and which originates entirely in a criminal indifference, that must absolutely be eradicated. That I mean, in which the generality of people live; who when they are spoke to on the subject of salvation, will reply that they hope to be saved as well as others: but there they stick, and will not join actions with their words. Nevertheless, not to go on at hazard in an affair of such importance, our confidence should be grounded on a firm and solid basis.

Now what is it you depend on, Christians? By what means do you hope to make your election certain? This is a point, it interests you highly to consider: and not to be imposed upon in a matter of so much consequence, you must once more attend to the documents of your Saviour. The way, of which he speaks, that leads to life, is narrow. Wherefore, to discover it, you have only to take notice if they, that walk in it, are comparatively few; for it is always

ways taken by the smaller number. The road, that conducts to perdition, is wide and spacious. Observe if the greatest part choose it ; for it is preferred by the crowd. If you follow the few, have confidence, and do not deviate from their footsteps : you are in the right way, and, on the assurance of your God, you may trust it will terminate happily. But, if you go with the multitude, and do as it does, on the testimony of this same God, tremble ; for you have every cause to dread. What do I say ? Your ruin is inevitable. Because this conformity with the world is a prognostic of your reprobation that is almost infallible.

But, my friends, to animate you to go on with courage, it remains to lay before you the motives, that engage you to it. The first of these is your peace of mind, whose anxiety and disquiet have often made you sob. For speak but the truth. What situation more deplorable than that of the heart, if not yet callous, when astray from the way of salvation ? What apprehensions ! What alarms ! Endeavour then to pursue steadily the road of virtue traced out to you. Does not reason, as well as religion suggest the propriety of sweetening life, and of preparing what may give us comfort at the hour of dissolution ?

Another

Another motive is on the part of time, which flies away rapidly. And this motive St. Paul urged to inspirit the Corinthians, under the most severe and trying circumstances. *The time*, he said, *is short*; the world is a passing figure; the evils, it abounds with, are but empty and fleeting shadows. We must run therefore to gain a prize, which so few, so very few obtain. The race indeed is fatiguing; but it is confined to narrow bounds. The pilgrimage is disagreeable; but its duration is not long. Whoever be here present, the greatest part of us are far advanced: A few years, a few months, a few days more will complete our course. He, that shall have run steadily through this valley of afflictions, shall repose in the bosom of God. Human weakness! is not this enough for thy encouragement and comfort? Was the duration of thy banishment far longer than what it is, what proportion between thy sufferings and the glory, that expects thee?

What further motive shall I suggest, Christians, but ever to keep in view the calamities, you are threatened with? Live as you please; stop, if you like, your ears to the remonstrances of conscience, still the formidable truths, I have here delivered

livered by the aid of heaven, will not be the less certain; nor will they operate less forcibly for having been so frequently repeated. You are told that, although *many be called*, only *few* will be *chosen*. I urge it once more, and inculcate again that there is every thing to apprehend both for the pastor and for the flock. No, there is no medium between an eternity of bliss and an eternity of wo.

Ah! my dear brethren, who now hear from my lips the immutable oracles of heaven, *bearden not your hearts*. Ps. 49. Take the advice of St. Peter, and omit nothing to ensure your safety. Let each individual fear lest he prove that unhappy tree, Christ speaks of in St. Matthew, that shall be sentenced to the flames, for not bringing forth good fruit. You may yet be saved, if you will but try for it. Confide in God's mercy; but do not sleep over your advantages. Dread the abuse of his grace; of that grace, by which he has called you *to his admirable light*. Form now the resolution to save your souls at every hazard. Remove all the impediments to the execution of so noble a project. *Stay not*, as the Angel said to Lot, *stay not in the country about thee*; Gen. xix, 17. but *save thyself in the mountain*,
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by a spiritual retirement amidst the avocations of your business. You are called; and so are many besides you. But this is not sufficient. Secure your vocation by the regularity of your lives. Solicit incessantly, and labour to acquire a well-grounded confidence of hereafter being admitted into the number of the chosen few: a blessing, I devoutly entreat the Almighty Sovereign to confer upon you. Amen.

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T H E R E W A S A C E R T A I N R U L E R , W H O S E S O N W A S
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HOW beneficent the bounty of the Deity, to grant all our petitions ! How extensive his power, to pledge himself to refuse us nothing ! How profuse his liberality, to encourage and even press us to solicit him ! By these marks we may rest satisfied of the benevolence of our God ; who, not content with heaping his favours on us, as in the
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case of this Ruler, (whose humble prayer was productive not only of his son's cure, but of his own and family's salvation) vouchsafes moreover to afford us the means of laying before him our wants and grievances. But alas ! Christians, what use do we make of prayer ; a gift so advantageous both to the virtuous and to the wicked : to the virtuous, to preserve them in righteousness ; to the wicked, to effect their conversion ?

To consider your indifference, might not one be inclined to think that, of all the duties of religion, prayer was the least important ? To rouse you from your torpor is the design of this discourse, in which I mean to explain both the extent and spirit of this precept ; or in other words, to shew you when and how you ought to pray. As to the former, Christ commands us to pray without intermission ; and for the latter, he requires us to make use of certain rules. The reasons, why we should pray incessantly, I will unfold to you, in the first place ; and in the second, will discover the means to render our prayers available. But let us previously beg that assistance, which ought to guide us in every step.

Do you desire, says, Jesus Christ, to obtain
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what you want of heaven? Pray, and pray always. Such, my friends, is the extent of this duty: the necessity, the advantages and the facility of which I will touch upon for your instruction and improvement.

To evince the obligation of prayer, can I take a better ground, than the innumerable necessities, under which we labour hourly? Yes, dear people; if you can suffice for yourselves, although only for an instant, cease to pray and welcome. But, who is there so presumptuous as to think himself without wants? We all of us find more than we can describe or express; and there are still many others, of which we are in no degree sensible, till brought to light by accident. Attacked on every quarter, we are perpetually almost in danger. Our restless passions foment an implacable rebellion. Scarce have we lopped off one vice, before another shoots up: and this subdued, a crowd of fresh ones appear, and call forth new exertions. The enemy of our salvation spares nothing to effect his purposes. If he finds us callous to the lures of pleasure, he holds out the baits of avarice. Who then can doubt of the necessity of constant prayer? We see it; we feel it. Every part of us has it's weakness; every object it's temptation.

Unskilled

Unskilled therefore, as we are, in the discipline of virtue, and arrant cowards, when called upon to make a stand against vice, what shall we oppose to such innumerable enemies? In these urgent extremities to whom shall we have recourse? Or what, O God, will become of us, unless, from the abyss of our misery, thou permittest us to raise our hands towards the throne of thy compassion?

I own, brethren, that the Almighty, from whom nothing is concealed, perceives what is good for us, both in spirituals and temporals. Nevertheless, he demands the tribute of our prayers. Because he is certainly the dispenser of his own gifts; and, as such, can dispose of them on the terms, he thinks proper. Now continual prayer is the first condition. For his divine Son assures us that we must *pray always and not faint*. Luke xviii, 1. Whence we may conclude that not even the most just have any thing to expect but through the medium of this channel. Because, as St. Augustin says, graces so valuable, as those, that lead to salvation, are highly deserving of our incessant entreaties.

For in vain, Christians, do you hope to obtain your petitions, unless you steadily persist in urging

and repeating them. To merit to be heard you must imitate the man, of whom the gospel tells us that he gives his friend no rest, till he yields to his importunity. How can you expect that favours of the utmost consequence should be granted to passing wishes; and that, at the instant your vows are formed, the divine mercy should be softened? Your pride is already too extravagant. But to what a pitch of folly would it swell, were the graces of heaven to cost so little? Wherefore, to remind us of our dependence, God wills that the aids, we want, be the recompense of our assiduous and unremitted prayers only.

But how can we be always praying, you say? Such an obligation is incompatible with our labours. Your work, I reply, is a constant prayer, if you submit to it for the love of God. The prayer of the heart is much more acceptable than that of the lips. Go then to your employments, brethren. The Deity does not require you to give that time to devotion, which, according to his ordinance, is destined to other business. Pray at the times assigned to prayer. Work at the hours devoted to work. This is the readiest way to accomplish God's will, and to make yourselves agreeable to him.

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But, my friends, the necessity of continual prayer will be still more apparent, if we reflect on the great advantages, that result from this sacred duty. Prayer is the surest means to render God propitious. It opens to him our miseries, and engages him to befriend us. It is the channel, through which every grace must be derived. It is an homage, that we owe to his Sovereign dominion. It is an avowal of our inability, and of that dependence, in which he keeps us, that the perpetual need of his help may unite us to him indissolubly.

But, to be persuaded of the consequence of prayer, consider it's power and efficacy. Yes, dear people, the power of prayer is unlimited. It includes the whole creation, and influences the Creator himself. One would think that death, which subdues all things, and which levels the monarch with the slave, should be invincible and uncontrolled. However, when we see Ezechias, obliging it to retire, and commanding it not to shew it's face again for the space of fifteen years, we are compelled to own the force of prayer to be superiour to the triumphs of death. The boisterous ocean, in it's foaming pride, seems to bid defiance to restraint. But behold it dividing at the

command of Moses, and giving a passage to God's inheritance, and confess the virtue of prayer. To contemplate the celestial bodies, whose motions are so regular; it seems impracticable to alter them. Yet the history of Josue informs us, that this power was reserved to prayer. In short, nothing is impossible to it. Whence St. Ambrose styles it omnipotent, and asserts that it's mighty efficacy is beyond the reach of bounds.

Again, when we pray, to whom do we address ourselves? To the most merciful, the most compassionate, the most tender of all parents. Yes, says Christ, *ask*; and, if you do it with perseverance, *you shall undoubtedly receive*. For do not you yourselves, he adds, callous as you are, give way to importunity? How much more readily will your heavenly Father listen to them, that solicit him without ceasing? And here, Christians, admire the singular privileges of the children of faith. It is not a friend you petition, an inconstant, and often faithless friend: it is not a hard-hearted, imperious master, who frequently prides himself on his insensibility. No. It is a father. It is a most indulgent and affectionate parent. Perhaps the means of some of you may be nearly exhausted. But what have you to fear? Is not such a support

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an ever-present resource? He is *your heavenly Father*; the Author of nature, whose independent happiness only makes him the more favourable, and the more ready to supply your wants. But what is it you are to expect of him? Not the transitory things of the flesh, which are often as pernicious as trivial, and are therefore unworthy of a Christian's desire: but the incorruptible things of the spirit, which are productive of eternal felicity; the only secret of obtaining which, is to sue for them with fervour.

Let this suffice for your encouragement, dear people: especially when you are told, that God refuses nothing to a persevering confidence, and delights to go beyond our wishes even. *I have given thee wisdom*, he says to Solomon, *because thou hast asked for it. Yea, and the things also, thou didst not ask for, I have given to thee; viz. riches and glory.* 3 Kings, iii. 13. So true it is that the Lord will provide for all our wants, if we lay them open to him with perseverance.

But to pray without intermission is a hard task, you say. What then do you imagine that continual prayer to be, which is here exacted of you? It is the elevation of the soul, conscious of it's misery, and which seeks incessantly to be relieved from it. It is the cry of the heart. It is a fervent aspiration

ration towards God. It is a constant desire to please him. Now find, if you can, the time, the place, or the employment, that excludes the possibility of always praying according to this explication. Look to your farms, inspect your accounts, attend to your families; all these, no doubt, are serious occupations. But tell me candidly, are they not compatible with the constant prayer, I here inculcate? We are incapable to keep our minds perpetually fixed on heaven. At least desire it; and, if your desire be continual, so will your prayer likewise.

But it is too much to impose such a burthen on us. Yes, my brethren, I recommend to you to pray incessantly, and I recommend it on the authority of our common master, Jesus Christ. It is the surest method to guard you against the dangers of dissipation, in which you too generally pass your lives. And, if you rightly comprehend the above explanation, there is nothing in this constant prayer that is either troublesome in itself, or inconsistent with your labours. Because this mode of prayer consists entirely in a habit of always acting with an intention of pleasing God, and a desire of doing every thing in him, and for him. For own the truth, my friends, do you think much of any difficulties, that occur in the pursuit of wealth? What do I say? Do you not experience the greatest
satis-

fatisfaction in concerns of this nature, though frequently attended with the most mortifying vexations? If your salvation then was equally dear; if you were as zealous to serve God, as you are to make your fortune, would you think the command of your Saviour, which enjoins you to pray always, a burthenfome command? Rather, would you not find in it your joy, and a support ever at hand amidst the tribulations of human life? But if the extent of this precept requires that we should pray at all times, the spirit of it exacts that we should pray by certain rules.

Now, the whole of these rules may be reduced to the two following heads: first, to pray in the name of Christ: secondly, to pray in a manner, that may be worthy of the God we supplicate.

It is written, that *every good gift cometh from above, and descendeth from the Father of lights*. Previously to man's fall, through the artifice of Satan, the super-excellent gift of grace was communicated immediately from the breast of God into the heart of man: as the petitions of man were wafted from his heart into the bosom of the Deity without intervention. But, sin having broke off and put an end to that lovely intercourse, man can no longer ask any thing of God directly by himself. A mediator is become necessary; and who should
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this be but Jesus Christ our Redeemer? A mediator in all regards both compassionate and powerful. *Compassionate*, I say. For we have not now an advocate, who cannot sympathize in our infirmities; but one vested with our nature, and acquainted with our miseries, before whom we may present ourselves with confidence and trust. I also say *powerful*. For of him alone it can be said, that he is heard, as St. Paul affirms, for the reverence due to his person. What may we not hope for then?

Do not therefore imagine, Christians, that when the Lord hears our requests, it is in consequence of either what we are, or what we deserve; since of ourselves we are nothing, and incapable of merit. When the Almighty listens to us, it is for the sake of his Son; because his beloved Son has prayed for us, when we could not pray for ourselves, and will continue to be our advocate till time shall be no more. The success of our petitions then depends upon their union and conformity with those of Christ. Wherefore, to render them efficacious, we ought to have the same object in view, and a like will in praying as our heavenly intercessor.

And what, dear people, was heretofore, and still continues to be the object of our Saviour's prayers?

prayers? No other than our sanctification. To this day he repeats on his throne what he said formerly on the eve of his passion; Father! I ask not that my disciples may be blessed on earth; my sole request for them is, that they may truly partake in thy sanctity; *sanctify them in truth.* John xvii. 17. And is the point, my brethren, in which your wishes centre? If sometimes you appear more than usually fervent, is it with the design to be more moderate in your passions, more disinterested in your pursuits, more patient under your sufferings? Rather, is it not to implore success on your undertakings, and prosperity through life? But be not deceived, St. Augustin says: to pray for things unconnected with the interests of futurity, is not to pray in the name, and by the authority of Christ. This he hints to his disciples, when, on the point of leaving them, he speaks as follows: *Hitherto you have not asked any thing in my name.* John xvi. 24. because they had requested nothing conducive to their salvation. A reproach, that might be made with no less truth to many of you, my friends, who, wrapped up in the concerns of life, have still to pray for what may lessen your censoriousness, and augment your charity; abate your love of the world, and increase your fervour; in a word,

word, amend your faults, and make you better Christians.

But is it wrong then to pray for temporal things? No: for the Church itself employs her credit in the prosecution of such purposes. But how does she petition for them? In the same order as her spouse does; *i. e.* with subordination to the views of heaven. Sanctify, O Lord! she says, my children: make them chaste, humble, patient; and give them such a share of the present good things, as may conduct them with security to the acquisition of those to come. This is the order Christ prescribes, and which the Church copies exactly; but which we too often invert, and model to our views. There is another abuse still, however, of which perhaps you are not conscious.

I am willing to hope that the main object of your prayers is the business of salvation. But, like Christ, do you conform your will to that of God? Or rather, are you not desirous to bend his will to yours? For in this regard many are deluded. On hearing a discourse, that touches their feelings, they beg of heaven to convert them. But they implore it for the moment only. They pray for this grace, as St. Augustin did for the gift of continence, which he dreaded to receive. You would be sorry God should take you at your word. You

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are willing to be converted; but not as yet, while your passions are alive, and uninjured by the hand of time. And what is this, but to ask of God a grace, that defeats the views of his providence; a grace, he never has granted; and finally, a grace he never can grant, because he is incapable of believing and falsifying his word.

But, besides praying in the name of Christ, we must also pray in such a manner as may become the Supreme Majesty. If our petitions be levelled at trifles only; if they go no further than human things, they insult the Lord, instead of honouring him; because they fall short of that sublime dignity, which is essential to his nature.

But what then is the meaning of those words: *All things, whatsoever you ask, when you pray, believe that you shall receive, and they shall come unto you.* Mark xi. 24. Christ promises to grant us every thing, that we may set no bounds to our desires. He makes us large offers, to encourage us to ask largely: *i. e.* to teach us to pray with that assurance of faith, which, St. James says, does not hesitate, and to which the Deity always yields. And sure nothing more likely to dispose God in our favour, than that firm and steady confidence, which, to our confusion let us own, is almost constantly wanting in the prayers we present to him.

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For, in fine, my brethren, when do we apply to heaven? When every human source is drained. Alas! let us dread lest, in lieu of that commendation, which Christ bestowed on the Centurion, *I have not found so great faith in Israel*; he should reproach us, as he did St. Peter, *why art thou afraid, O man of little faith*? Or why dost thou doubt of my power? You pray indeed, and that frequently; but you abandon yourselves to anxiety. You run to me; but it is only at the last extremity, when every thing else has failed you. You rely on me; but you trust to yourselves still more. Ungrateful and faithless Christians! Why do you distrust my benevolence? What more is wanting to incline me to stop my arm? To avoid this his just reproach, my friends, let the example of the Centurion excite and route our faith. For, if our belief be firm like his, we shall pray as much as we ought, and in the manner we ought; and shall completely fulfil both the precept and the spirit of this momentous obligation.

Wherefore, dear people, let us determine from this hour to be careful in using the means, that may render our petitions grateful: to pray with humility and with attention, which are other conditions of prayer, that my limits forbid the mention of. Above all, let us pray in the sacred mansions

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of our God. It is there Jesus Christ resides, the Eternal Priest and only victim worthy of the Divinity. It is there the weak may be made strong; and sinners, blended with the just, may become virtuous and Saints. It is there, in short, the Church, that chaste and immaculate spouse, wafts her sighs to heaven: sighs, that ever challenge the respect of the Sovereign Being. Let us pray in all places. For, since Christ has cleansed it by the effusion of his blood, the whole earth is become a temple, in which we may offer our petitions to him. Once more then, let us pray; and, as I have here so frequently repeated, let us pray without ceasing. Thus we shall move and draw down the grace of God; and this will prepare and dispose us for his glory. Amen.

T H E
TWENTY-FIRST SUNDAY

After **P E N T E C O S T.**

On the Sufferings of a Middle State.

AND HIS LORD BEING ANGRY, DELIVERED HIM
TO THE TORTURES, UNTIL HE SHOULD PAY
ALL THE DEBT. Matt. xviii. 34.

THE design of this lesson, Christians, is to inculcate the love of our brethren, and to shew us the necessity of forgiving them, that injure us: a matter, of which you were convinced, I hope, when I handled this branch of charity, on the fifth Sunday after Pentecost. At present I intend to draw from it a different instruction; but an instruction, I say, still referable to this same important

tant subject : inasmuch as it regards our acquaintance, our intimates, our parents; in a word, all those, with whom we have lived, and who by the decrees of heaven, are gone before us into the regions of the dead.

The conduct of this wicked servant towards his debtor is descriptive of that of the Deity towards such, as die contaminated with the guilt of venial sin. He will cast them into prison, and will say to them; *thou shalt not go from thence, till thou hast paid the last farthing.* Matt. v. 26.

Reason as you please, my friends, it is an unquestionable principle that sin must be expiated either here or hereafter. We must do penance or burn. Another principle, no less certain, is that this penance must bear a proportion to the crime it is meant to atone for. Nevertheless, it is true that, in pardoning our offences, God is willing to forgive us the eternity of wo, entailed upon their malice. But let us not be so deluded as to suppose he will exempt us from the temporal punishments due to them.

These principles, which are as sure, as they are calculated to alarm us, being admitted, if we desire to find mercy hereafter, we must practise it at present, in regard to the faithful departed. To this point I mean to lead you, brethren, for your edi-

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fication and welfare. To accomplish which happy ends, I will, first, set before you the rigours of purgatory; and secondly, will shew the cause of the sufferings there inflicted. But let us previously implore the aid and support of *the Father of mercies*.

I do not fear to assert, dear people, that the sufferings of the middle state are exquisite, immense, and inconceivable. First, because nothing is more dreadful than the loss of God, from whom they are separated, Secondly, because nothing is more excruciating than the fire, to which they are sentenced.

It is a truth, founded on experience, that, of all punishments, there is none so great as to love, without being able to possess the object of our affections. And this the Wise-man insinuates, when he tells us; that *love is strong as death*. Cantic, viii. 6. For, says St. Gregory, it's effect, in regard to the mind, are similar to those of death, in regard to the body: and as the latter extinguishes our feelings with respect to the objects of sense; so does the former make them, that love God ardently, insensible to every thing temporal, from the desire of what is eternal. It is a glowing fire, St. Ambrose says, in the hearts of the Saints, which refines the dross of human corruption, and purifies whatever it touches. There are few among us, Christians,
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that are acquainted with it in this degree. But give me a heart, that loves passionately, exclaims St. Augustin, and it will feel what I aver.

Now, if the impatience of charity be so exceedingly distressing, judge, brethren, what the souls in purgatory must suffer, whose ideas of the Divinity are far more clear than ours. For, as the Wise-man says, our knowledge of God is very incomplete: because *this corruptible body depresseth the mind*. Wis. ix. 15. But the souls in purgatory, emancipated from the ties of the flesh, and no longer affected by those sensible objects, that envelop us, tend only towards him, their sovereign and sole good, whom they know, with all his perfections. And as their acquaintance with his attributes is the measure of their love, so both these things unite to produce in them a vehement longing to see and to possess him: insomuch that, finding themselves still excluded from his presence, they undergo more from this privation than description can delineate.

Nor am I surpris'd at the intenseness of their grief, when I call to mind the piercing regret, the bitter sorrow of Absalom, on being removed from his father's sight. This prohibition was so insupportable to him, that he told the commander Joab that, if David could not pardon him and overlook

his crime, he rather wished to be put to death, than not enjoy his presence. Ah! dear Christians, if such an ungracious son as Absalom, in whose bosom nature itself had already lost it's power, thinks himself so wretched, that he prefers the loss of life to the forfeiture of David's presence, how extreme must be the anguish of these tender and pious souls, who cannot obtain the comfort of seeing him, in whom their affections centre?

And here, my friends, indulge me with a momentary digression. Howsoever great we may suppose the dignity of these souls, I represent them to myself as still unhappy; both because God is present with, and because he is absent from them. Unhappy from his presence; since he is only with them to make them feel the weight of his vengeful arm: unhappy from his absence; since he seems to have laid aside all compassion in their regard. Unhappy from God's presence; because it occasions them to suffer the most cutting regret, the most racking anxiety, the most intolerable grief: unhappy from his absence; because it deprives them of all joy, all consolation, all rest. In vain do they sigh, do they pray, do they moan: their sighs are useless, their prayers ineffectual, their moanings unheard. Heaven to them is a heaven of brass. There is no one at hand to wipe away
their

their tears. They seek God, and he flies from them; they look for him, and he hides himself. In this abandoned state they exclaim; alas! O Lord! where shall we find a shelter from the afflictions of thy justice? *Who will grant me this, that thou protect me, till thy wrath pass?* Job. xiv, 13. To mitigate our sufferings, *appoint us at least a time, in which thou wilt remember, and compassionate our wretchedness.*

This time, dear people, is in some measure at our disposal. We may assign, if I dare so to speak, the wished-for moment of their deliverance. Their salvation is in our hands. Yes, my brethren, it is your part to hasten it by your endeavours. Sacrifice and alms-deeds will quickly afford them comfort. If the mediocrity of your fortune forbids you to take the latter method, you may at least do them this kind office by the mediation of the former; that so the Sovereign Judge may abridge the time of their sufferings; may *remember* them in his mercy, and receive them into bliss.

And truly, Christians, to refuse to alleviate their sorrows, would be to give the strongest proof possible of your ingratitude and hard-heartedness. For who are they that suffer? They are your friends, who, during life, rejoiced at your prosperity, and

consoled you in adversity; who partook in your mirth, and sympathized in your grief. They are brothers united to you by the strictest bonds of charity. They are your parents, that gave you life, and fed you with their labour. And can you be so ungrateful, as to profit by their industry, without so much as thinking of them? You are obligated to assist them both by the law of nature, and by that of religion, which requires you to extend your charity to all your fellow-members. And who more deserving of it than those unhappy souls, who are completing the course of sufferings, the Almighty justice has consigned them to?

It is the opinion of the holy Fathers that the souls in this middle state are purified by fire. And on this head St. Augustin is clear, when, explaining those words of the Psalmist, *O Lord! rebuke me not in thy indignation, do not punish me, he says, in thy anger, my God! but so cleanse me from my sins, that I may not be one of them, that shall be saved, yet so as by fire.* 1 Cor. iii, 15. It is true, this fire is not eternal, as that of hell is: but for the rest, brethren, it's operation on the soul is so active, that St. Gregory thinks it no less penetrating than that, which shall have no end. And to form some judgment of it, it is sufficient to be apprized that it is kindled by the breath of
a God

a God. O treasury of wrath! what terrors dost thou contain? To see nothing, to feel nothing, to breathe nothing but flames! What tremendous sufferings! in viewing which, the imagination shrinks back, appalled with horror. Yes, says Tertullian, in this fire, as in a repository of torments, all other punishments are collected; all those, the savage cruelty of the tyrants could invent; all those, the generous constancy of the martyrs could support; all those, the fancy can paint in the most terrifying colours. Punishments, in short, in comparison with which the most barbarous tortures, that can be inflicted in this life, appear trivial and insignificant.

And what should move you still more, my friends, in favour of these suffering souls is that they are unable to relieve themselves, or procure a mitigation of the evils, they endure. In the words of David they cry out; *the sorrows of death surround me, and the perils of hell encompass me*; Ps. 17. Why then, O God of Justice! dost thou reject our lamentations? Why dost thou complete our misery, by alienating our former acquaintance from us, who now seem to regard us as the objects of their horror only? Imagine, if you can, a more deplorable situation, than to live
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in a state of the most intense and constant sufferings, without being able to obtain the smallest comfort.

Ah! dear brethren, hear their complaints, as delivered by the afflicted Job. *Have pity on me, have pity on me, at least you my friends; because the hand of the Lord hath touched me.* Job xix, 21. If you have any feeling left, be mindful of us: if you are mindful of us, compassionate, and assist us in our distress. The hand of the Deity keeps us down, do you raise us up. His justice torments, let your charity console us. We suffer the punishments justly due to our sins; mitigate them, if you can, by your alms, or at least by your fervent prayers. Would you *persecute us like God*, and glut yourselves with our sorrows? Such, Christians, are the sufferings, the state of purgatory presents us with. It remains to shew you briefly how these sufferings are incurred.

Strange blindness of the human understanding! Deluded by the wiles of error, if it loses not entirely the idea of its real happiness, how often does it mistake it? How empty the phantoms, that beguile us! How visionary the fears, that warp us! How ungrounded the assurances, that encourage and imbolden us to go on without remorse!

In general, we make light of such frailties, as must delay the possession of the felicity, we aspire to. We are unsollicitous to repair them by the tears of a true repentance: and, what is still more surprising, we scarcely apprehend the satisfaction owing for them. Such are the defects, dear people, that ought to make us dread, if not the flames of hell, at least the fire of purgatory. Defects, observe, which, to speak more plainly, consist, first, in the little account we make of sin; secondly, in the little care we take to satisfy for it; and thirdly, in the little fear we harbour of the sufferings of this middle state.

It is strange to see the unconcern, with which the generality of us offend in such matters, as we term venial. It is no more than a venial sin, we say; and a venial sin is but a trifle. But, my friends, this very circumstance is an addition to your guilt, and renders you inexcusable. If the fault be so trivial, why then do you commit it? In my opinion, it is this point, in particular, that shews the grievousness of venial sin. Was the matter in question the gratification of a violent passion, I might reproach you with your weakness; yet, after all, while I condemned, I should also pity you. But, in the case of venial sin, wilfully indulged

dulged I mean, it is no longer weakness, but malice. It is no more than a venial sin. But, ³¹ does not your contempt for the divine law, does not the scandal you give to others, does not the malignity of your views entirely change it's nature? It is no more than a venial sin. I am willing to suppose it. But does not a venial sin offend your God, the highest of all sovereigns, the best of all parents, the most faithful of all friends?

And here, Christians, reflect on the cause why the souls in purgatory endure so much. What you are so easy and carelessly unconcerned about is one of their greatest torments. The sole thought of having offended God, although but venially, is like a dart, that pierces their inmost souls. Their grief is inconsolable for having alienated their Sovereign good for the sake of an empty trifle. For this alone is the reason why he banishes them from his presence; why he detains them in this horrid prison; why he makes them undergo the most excruciating sufferings; sufferings, that are dreadful, excessive, incomprehensible. Doubtless, as there is no punishment more just than that, occasioned by the sight of their sins, so neither is there any more grievous, nor more afflictive to their senses.

Ah!

Ah! brethren, what an extenuation of their misery would it be, was God inclined to grant these distressed souls the favours, he bestows on us! Far from incumbering themselves with fresh debts, how industrious would they be to discharge the past, both by the sanctity of their lives, and by the rigour of their austerities? Deeply impressed with the idea of the majesty of God and the severity of his justice, should we not find them as intent on pleasing him by the purity of their love, as by the fervour of their prayers? more ready than Abraham to part from their dearest connections: more generous than Isaac to offer themselves in sacrifice: more submissive than Jacob in the most slavish employments: more patient than Job in the most trying occurrences: more zealous than Elias for the propagation of his glory and the aggrandizement of his kingdom?

But what am I attempting, Christians? Without dwelling on the supposed industry of those disconsolate souls, were they in a capacity of acting, why do not we think on what our own duty requires? Why, after the commission of so many atrocious crimes, are we so dilatory and backward in making satisfaction for them? Why do we still continue to be so fond of ourselves, and so averse to the cross of Christ? What then! Is not heaven

heaven deserving of our most serious endeavours? Or can we expect to reach it by any other way than that, which Jesus Christ has traced for our direction? Do we not know that unless we die with him, we can have no part in his resurrection?

But I will do penance in purgatory, you reply. God grant, my friends, that such of you, as act upon this principle, may not be reduced to do it in the mansions of the damned. For what assurance have you to support your bold assertion? But, although it should be true that God will favour you so far, as to allow you to do penance among those, that are gone before you, is it a reasonable way of thinking to wish to do it there, where it will be so rigorous and harsh. Do you reflect on what you are saying? And has what I have here told you, respecting the terrors of purgatory, made so faint an impression on you? Alas! The trifling evils of this life alarm, deject, oppress you: and you are not afraid, you are even desirous to fall into the hands of the living God; an avenging God; a God, who is not to be appeased with prayers, not to be softened with tears, not to be moved with mercy, till his justice be fully satisfied. What an inconceivable perverseness!

Preserve, O God! this thy people and myself from such a blindness. Pierce us with thy holy
fear

fear to the very marrow of our bones. Teach us, like Job, to be so distrustful of all our actions, as to perform none without weighing them in the balance of the sanctuary. And, to satisfy for our sins, inspire us to apply, by worthy fruits of penance, the merits of our Saviour's passion. *Thou hast been our refuge, O Lord!* Pl. 89, in having framed us to thy image. Be so still, in moulding us to the resemblance of thy perfections. Thou canst, we know, annihilate us: but thy compassion will render thee propitious to our sighs. Vouchsafe then, O God of mercies! to look upon thy servants, the work of thy hands. Prostrate at thy feet, with tears in our eyes, and compunction in our hearts, we conjure thee to forgive us. *Direct thy children*, ib. that thy light may discover to us the rigour of thy justice, the enormity of our faults, and the extent of our obligations; that it may make us obedient to thy commands; may induce us to renounce sin; and, finally, may conduct us to the possession of thy bliss. Amen.

T H E
TWENTY-SECOND SUNDAY
After PENTECOST.

On the Observance of the Divine Law.

RENDER TO CESAR THE THINGS, THAT ARE
CESAR'S; AND TO GOD THE THINGS, THAT
ARE GOD'S. MATT. xxi, 22.

SUCH is the answer of Jesus Christ to the Pharisees, who, under the cloak of deference to his judgment, conceal their black design of attempting his sacred person. An answer, which, while it silences his enemies, affords to his friends a most serious and useful lesson. St. Chrysostom, explaining this passage, asserts that to give to man what belongs to man, and to God what belongs to

to God what belongs to God, are two points easily to be allied. Because, according to St. Paul, all powers being *ordained by God*, Rom. xiii, 1. in paying obedience to our rulers, we pay obedience to God himself. Wherefore, let us ever be attentive to render to each their respective dues.

And to discharge this obligation, as far as it relates to the Deity, let us candidly examine if hitherto it has been our study to *render to God* what we owe him; if we have given him our whole allegiance; if our ideas of his sacred law have been such, as to determine us invariably to a faithful observance of it. Alas! Christians, without waiting for your answer, may I not venture to say to you what our Saviour said to the Jews; *no one among you fulfils the law*? For either we find it too severe, or ourselves unequal to it. My design therefore is to convince you that your complaints are ungrounded; and that you are guilty in the extreme, when you neglect to do your utmost to keep this heavenly law. In short, I propose to shew you, first, the obligations it lays upon us; by which you will perceive it is not so rigorous, as you imagine: and, secondly, how to accomplish it; which will discover to you your backwardness. Authour of light! remove our darkness, and conduct

duct us, we here implore, through the mist of error, that furrounds us.

So far is the law of God from being injurious to our freedom, that it confirms it in all its latitude. Whence it styled by St. James a law of *perfect liberty*, which alone can ensure us rest. To be satisfied of which, my friends, it will be enough to investigate the obligations it enjoins. Now, these obligations, I say, are threefold. Obligations in regard to God: obligations in regard to our neighbour: obligations in regard to ourselves. And, in which ever light you view it, I hope to make it clear that, although the divine law be branded with the name of rigid, it contains nothing in itself, that can justify the imputation.

To adore God, to serve him, to love him preferably to all things are the leading articles prescribed by the dictates of his law. And are these duties so difficult, when we reflect that the Lord, whom we are commanded thus to worship, is infinitely great, infinitely good, infinitely powerful?

God is great. Alas! what is all worldly grandeur? What the monarchs of the earth, in comparison with the Deity? Yes, God is great; and he alone is truly so. *Great is the Lord*, says the Psalmist, *and highly to be praised; and of his greatness there is no end.* Ps. 144. What objection then

can we have to adore and love a God, so superlatively eminent? Were we able to comprehend the extent of his Supreme majesty, we should be sensible of our inability to serve him as he merits. Let us dive into it, as far as possible however, and we shall readily obey him. Nothing will then seem hard; but we shall chearfully exert ourselves to honour him with the tribute of the most animated zeal. *Come, says David, let us adore our God, and fall down before him: let us weep before the Lord, that made us; for he is the Lord, our God.* Ps. 49. Such was the homage this pious Monarch rendered to him: an homage so much the more illustrious, as it was the result of his acquaintance with the Sovereignty of his grandeur.

Moreover, God is infinitely good. What a motive to induce us to be faithful to his commands! He has loved us from the beginning; *so as to give us his only Son, that whoever believeth in him may not perish; but may have everlasting life.* John, iii, 16. He loves us at present, so as to compassionate and spare us, when we insult him by sin. Nor is this all, dear people. For, *having loved his inheritance, he loved them to the end.* John, xiii, 1. In proof of which he gives them his own sacred flesh for their daily food and sustenance. In a word, on whatever side we turn

ourselves, we are compelled to acknowledge that we have nothing we do not hold of his bounty and munificence.

And to engage you more effectually to be obedient to the divine law, Christians, I add that the God, who exacts your service, unites with the above attributes a power no less supreme. *He spoke*, the scripture tells us, *and all things were made*. Observe the heavens and the earth, the trees, the flowers, the corn. Nor stop here, says St. Augustin; but admire his almighty hand in the most minute and little insects: see the delicacy of their frames, and the nicety of their organization. But, if the mark of the Divinity be so visible in these smaller things, how much more apparent is it in the larger works of nature? Truly we may say, brethren; *O Lord, God of virtues! who is like to thee?* Pl. 70. Serve then your God faithfully, since he is so great, so good, so powerful. Sincerely lament that you have so often preferred the austere maxims of the world to the amiable precepts of your bountiful Creator. Say to him from your heart; thou, O Lord! art our Master; teach us then to obey thee with fidelity and steadiness.

Would you see the picture of a Christian, who is truly submissive to the mandates of God's law?

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He is a man, who serves his Maker to the full extent of his abilities. He is a being entirely spiritual, who, actuated by faith, places his happiness in God alone. He is a servant ever attentive to the will of his Superiour. He is a soldier ever active to oppose the enemies of his King, and ever ready to part with his life, rather than yield them the least advantage. But to proceed; in the next place, let us examine the obligations, this law enjoins in relation to our neighbour.

If you desire to accomplish the commands of heaven in this regard, you must be humble, patient, disinterested and charitable. The person, that wishes to behave to his neighbour as the law of God prescribes, so far from purloining, or even coveting what is not his own, is disposed at least, to share with him what he has; and will sooner forget an injury, than the most ungrateful can a favour. Now, do not these obligations, as many others I might mention, entirely coincide with our interest and welfare? And do they then deserve to be deemed so repugnant? How truly deplorable would our situation be were the hostile acts of passion permitted by that law, which now forbids them so severely? Theft, rapine, murder and a deluge of other evils would inevitably break in upon us; the unhappy consequences of which I

cannot doubt but you feel, when you consider them as they relate to yourselves and your property. How perverse then must you be to accuse that system of rigour, which condemns every attempt injurious to your neighbour?

Add to this, my dear people, that the law of God commands us to assist our fellow-creatures to the utmost of our power: to be an eye to the blind and a foot to the lame, according to the expression used by Job: to pay attention not only to their temporal, but also to their spiritual wants: to bring back to the road of virtue such, as passion leads astray: to dry up the tears of them, that corroding grief oppresses. Be but sincere then. Does the divine law, in thus seconding the finest feelings of our nature, impose any thing upon us, that can with truth be styled too much?

For, in short, not to delude ourselves, it must ever be our care to preserve *the unity of the spirit in the bond of christian peace*. Otherwise we forfeit the privilege of our inheritance; we forego the advantages of our baptismal renovation; we become unworthy of the title of the members of Jesus Christ. Because we cannot have God for our father, unless we do our best to live in amity with our brethren. This is the foundation, the very soul of the christian institute.

Neither

Neither is it hard to exculpate this sacred law, if we consider it in such of it's precepts, as relate to ourselves. For to call a man an observer of it, is the same thing as to say that he is humble, chaste, temperate; that his life is a continued struggle to subject his rebellious passions, and that he uses creatures from necessity only, without sharing his affections with them. I own these commands are harsh. But to whom? To such remiss and lax people, who, on the plea of it's great severity, take no pains to fulfil what this holy law enjoins. Examine it's mandates closely; and you will find that the denials, which at first sight appear so rigorous, have no other design in view than that of your real welfare.

Again, my friends. On what are your complaints against the law of God founded? Do you speak from experience, or from want of inclination? It is intolerable, you exclaim. But what, I ask, makes it so? Is it your weakness or your indolence? Alas! you betray no weakness, but in the cause of God and righteousness. On the contrary, how alert, how industrious, how indefatigable are you, when called upon by interest, or the syren-voice of pleasure! But that your charges may be admissible, begin by fulfilling it. Then

indeed you may remonstrate with something like a grace.

One more reflection, Christians, and I will finish this first part. The law of God seems rigid to them only, that do not love him. For to a heart inflamed with charity it is amiable in all it's mandates. St. Augustin, on this subject, introduces the Deity speaking, and reproaching us as follows: examine the merits of each party, and decide for yourselves: avarice enjoins you to brave the winds, and scorn fatigue. Avarice is obeyed; while my injunctions, although levelled solely at your happiness, are rejected as impracticable. Is it not a shame that the world should have a greater influence on us than our Creator? that we should continually raise difficulties, when heaven speaks, and make light of every obstacle at the command of sordid passion? Blush at the very idea, and resolve for the time to come to obey the divine law with all the fidelity you can. But next, let us examine in what this fidelity consists.

The most essential duty of a Christian is to know and to comply with the commands of the Lord, his God. But what is the general practice of such, as style themselves his followers? A total disregard almost of the precepts of their Maker. Wherefore, to prevent, as much as possible, the
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contagion of their example, I will here shew the rules of the obedience he requires of us. First, we must obey his law promptly; so as to take it up without demur. Secondly, we must obey it universally; so as to comply with it in all it's articles. Thirdly, we must obey it with constancy; so as to adhere to it to the end.

Nurtured in the bosom of that sacred religion, in which God is adored *in spirit and truth*, gratitude calls upon us to devote our days to his service. But how little, alas! do we hearken to her? Tepid and cold in the interest of virtue, we pride ourselves on being zealous Christians at the very time we are faithless rebels.

For instance; we know we must reform our lives, and that, to do it to the purpose, we must renounce our evil habits. But when will this take place? No one is willing to fix the time. On the contrary; every one endeavours to ward off the evil day, and replies with the insolvent debtor, *have patience with me, and I will pay thee.* Matt. xviii, 26.

And what, brethren, is wanting to inspirit and invigorate us? Oh! it is that ardour from above, which animated the Peters, the Magdalens, the Augustins. For such, says St. Bernard, is the pre-eminence of charity. We grant willingly to
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it what we refuse to the threats of wo. Under the impulse of the fear of hell, we continue undecided: but, influenced by the spirit of charity, we break forth into immediate action. A spark of it would suffice to make us ashamed of our tepidity, and stimulate our indifference.

I confess, my friends, it is no small matter of surprise to see the attempts, that people make to distinguish between the mysteries and the precepts of God's law. They submit obsequiously to the former, because they do not clash with their pursuits; while they, at least practically, disclaim the latter, because they condemn their licentiousness. But let such Christians know, (if still they deserve the name of Christians) that their efforts to shake off and rid themselves of the yoke are useless and unavailable. Serve they must, in spite of opposition. If they refuse to acknowledge God, they must be tributary to Baal. If they are not subjects of the law of grace, they must be slaves to the dominion of sin.

If therefore you wish, brethren, to be free from apprehension, fulfil the divine law in every article it prescribes. Let your obedience be universal. The fewer exceptions you make, the greater ease will you experience: as, by a contrary rule, the more indulgences you allow yourselves, the more
perilous

perilous your risk. For example, you make light of that censoriousness, which habit has inured you to. Perhaps, in regard to their object, your slanders may not be mortal. But is it not to be feared they will gradually pave the way to more serious transgressions? Unimportant in themselves, they become weighty in their consequences.

Thus, your distractions in the time of prayer, by degrees, produce indevotion and a disrelish of things spiritual. That hastiness of temper gives birth to the sallies of passion. Those secret animosities end in open and avowed enmities. For the truth of which we have the assurance of the Holy Ghost; we have the word of Jesus Christ; we have the testimony of experience. All of which concur to prove how zealous you should be to observe the divine law in it's lesser points, if you desire not to infringe it in it's more essential and solemn dictates.

Finally, dear people, that our fidelity be perfect, it must be durable and constant. Had our Redeemer promised a crown to such, as are entering on the path of virtue, how many might pretend to it? But no. Christ has told us positively that his Father does not regard the warmth of the beginner: that he will only pay attention to our constancy and persistence: and that whatever good we may have done,

done, we are not to look for his happiness, unless our obedience be permanent. *He, that shall persevere to the end, he shall be saved.* Matt. xxiv. 13.

What a comfort, my friends, to be assured that a few moments patience will open the gates of heaven to us! Was the fidelity, God exacts, to render our mortal state a thousand times more laborious; still, this life being so short, and eternity so near, why should we be solicitous for the one, which passes so rapidly, and neglectful of the other, which will never never end?

Reflect, I pray you, often, Christians, on these serious and important truths. *The enemy* is ever watchful to *sow his tares* in your hearts: be you ever attentive therefore to defeat his designs. Whatever degree of virtue you may have already attained to, you are still very far from the perfection, you should aim at. Whatever obedience you may have paid to the divine law, there is still room for merit, by a stricter observance of it. Whatever efforts you may have used to secure your election, it is still an unfinished and incomplete work. To die like the Saints, your watchings and your labours must only end with life.

How happy will you be, if, at the critical moment of your departure, your conscience shall bear testimony that you have finished your course piously,

ously, and uniformly trod' in the path of God's commandments! When the Deity, pleased with a triumph, the effect of his grace, and of your courage at the same time, shall say to you as he did to Abraham, *Now I know that thou fearest me*: Gen. xxii. 12. *and because thou hast done this thing*; because you have left nothing unattempted in my service, *I will bless thee*; I will heap my choicest favours on you; I will make you ample amends for the violence, you have done yourselves; and you shall own that, if I insist on being served as a God, I know how to recompense you in a divine and god-like manner. Wherefore, let us henceforth be exact, my brethren, in complying with his law; since, not content to reward us on earth, he will immortalize us in heaven. Amen.

T H E
TWENTY-THIRD SUNDAY
After P E N T E C O S T.

On Peace of Mind.

BE OF GOOD CHEER, THY FAITH HATH MADE
THEE WHOLE. MATT. ix, 22.

HAVING already entertained you on the articles of faith and death, two subjects, the present gospel exhibits to our view, I mean here to lay before you, Christians, the consideration of those gracious words, which our Redeemer addressed to the woman, that applied to him so respectfully.

Thy faith hath made thee whole, he says; thou art

art cured; depart in peace. Here we see verified that oracle of the Lord, announced by the prophet Jeremy; *return to me, and I will receive thee.* Jer. iii, 1. This distressed and afflicted female sought eagerly for her Saviour; and he repayed her pious efforts by casting an eye of pity on her, and telling her to *be of good heart.* As she was fearful, says St. Chrysostom, Christ begins by encouraging her. He calls her his daughter; because her faith fully entitled her to be ranked among his children. He pours into her soul the balm of heavenly comfort, and dismisses her in peace. How happy should we be to hear the like assurance from him; *thy faith hath made thee whole*; depart therefore in peace, and be healed of thy infirmity.

Shall we never, my dear friends, have such a faith, such an humility, such a compunction for our sins, as to become the children of God; and, in that glorious quality, to be freed from all uneasiness, and possess a true peace? No, I tell you, you never will enjoy that tranquillity of mind, in which alone consists the happiness of life, until you be at peace, first, with God; secondly, with every neighbour; and, thirdly, with yourselves. Only lend a due attention to the discussion of these points, and you will need no further inducement

ducement to make you desire to be at peace. But, first, let us implore that assistance from above, which alone can guide our steps to the knowledge of true wisdom.

Informed by the light of reason, and still more by fatal experience, St. Augustin calls aloud to us ; cross the seas, travel the world over, go where you will or can ; if you look for any thing but God, be sure of being unhappy. You will meet with nothing but anxiety. For thou hast made us for thyself, O Lord ! continues this holy penitent, nor can our heart be at ease until it rest in thee. And this, my brethren, is one of those truths, that our own reflection attests sufficiently. For to draw the character, in brief, of the person, that relies on God : he is a man, who, submissive to the orders of providence, has no other will but that of his almighty Creator ; and who thus erects his peace on a solid and sure foundation. The master of his passions, he envies no one ; because he is as indifferent about his own elevation, as that of other people. Misfortune does not discourage him ; because he considers it, sometimes, as the scourge of justice ; at other times, as the work of mercy ; always, as the effect of a will, which is the measure of his own. He fears not the failure of his future expectations ; since
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God is his security : nor does he value the loss of present things ; since his heart is not attached to them. The alteration of his circumstances has no influence on his felicity ; nor does the chill of adversity damp his quiet and content of mind.

But, reverse the case, my friends. The grace of heaven once forfeited, peace will quickly disappear. For *who can have peace with God*, says Job, *that resists his holy will?* Job, ix, 4. Satan, the enemy of tranquillity, takes advantage of the opportunity to spread uneasiness and trouble. *Hadst thou hearkened to my commands*, says the Almighty to his favoured people, *thy peace had been as a river, and as the waves of the rolling sea.* If. xlviii, 18. And in another place, addressing himself to them by the mouth of the prophet Baruch, enquire he says, no longer, Israel, *why thou art grown old in a strange country, in a land of servitude : thou hast forsaken me*, the source of happiness. *If thou hadst walked in the way of God : if thou hadst served me, as I desired, thou hadst surely dwelt in peace for ever.* Learn where is wisdom, therefore, that thou mayest find out true peace. Baruch, iii, 11.

Happy then the man both for time and eternity, Christians, who makes it his study to bow implicitly to the will of heaven. Nothing can discompose him. If God be pleased to strew his way with

crosses, either by the malice of enemies or the casualties of life, he receives them as the trials and experiments of his fidelity. If he threatens him with the sword of unmerited persecution, instead of complaining, he makes it the subject of his joy. If his endeavours to push his fortune, or procure a maintenance for his family prove unsuccessful and abortive, he only takes occasion from it to bless the Lord with redoubled ardour; firmly persuaded that whatever be the event, it is more for his advantage than the most favourable issue. Determined, as he is, to acquiesce in the will of God, his contentment and happiness is beyond the reach of accident.

Do you desire then, dear people, to be at peace with your Sovereign good? Besides this resignation, so necessary to the acquirement of it, two other conditions are indispensably requisite: first, a hatred of sin; secondly, a resolution and purpose of avoiding it. I say a hatred of sin. God and sin are irreconcilable opponents. He, who sides with the one, is at enmity with the other. Are you the slaves of sin then, brethren? If so, you belong not to God. You are at peace with Satan, whose works you accomplish: you cannot be at peace with God therefore, whose orders you disobey. The oracle of Christ is explicit; *no one*

can serve two masters. Matt. vi, 24. Wherefore, if you would be at peace with the Deity, begin by hating sin. If once you hate it cordially, you will soon lose all relish for it. And thus, disengaged from every vitious attachment, you may confidently hope to be at peace with your God. Let us next see the means of preserving it with our neighbour.

To be satisfied that peace with our fellow-creatures is essential, we need but reflect on what the gospel tells us of it. Would you know, says our Redeemer, how the world is to judge of your affinity to me? If they see that you love and cherish one another; *by this shall men know that you are truly my disciples.* John, xiii, 35. Peace and philanthropy are the characteristics of my children: these shall distinguish them from the offspring of the world, who place their delight in contention and rancour. To unite us with the cement of this amiable concord, Jesus Christ *has made a kingdom* of all that bear his name.

In the infancy of the Church, the whole collection of the faithful had but one heart and one soul. But how very rare, alas! is this happy union at present! This, nevertheless, is the mark we should aim at; or in vain do we pretend to the peace
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of Jesus Christ. Hence the learned Origen remarks that the Son of God imparted his peace to the disciples in the evening only; *when it was late, and the doors were shut*. John, xx. 19. And the reason he gives for it is that in the morning, and at mid-day, they were probably dispersed; but in the evening they all met to present their supplications. Whence he infers that, if Christ only gave his peace to the Apostles, when they were assembled in a body, although their separation was in no regard criminal, we are by far less fit to receive it, when, for the sake of some paltry interest, we violate that harmony, which should unite and conjoin us.

Do not however imagine, brethren, that an unalterable state of peace is attainable here below. Living, as we do, in a world, where people's tempers are so various, it is hardly possible never to feel the heat of anger and impatience. But if we obey the laws of Christianity, so as to suppress all such emotions, we shall still fulfil our duty, and retain the peace of Christ. And this, doubtless, it was that made David say with such confidence; *I maintained peace with them, that hated peace*. Ps. 119. In explaining which words, St. Augustin tells us the wheat must bear with the chaff,

chaff, until the corn of the Lord be winnowed. While on earth, we cannot avoid being blended with the wicked. Heaven alone is free from the intrusion of their society. Nevertheless, the great Apostle, who was perfectly sensible of our condition, exhorts us to do our utmost to preserve peace with all mankind. On which occasion he uses this remarkable expression, *if it be possible*; Rom. xii, 18. i. e. notwithstanding all the difficulties, leave nothing untried to maintain this lovely concord.

For this purpose I will set before you the example of St. Monica, in which the married, in particular, may find their edification. Monica, the mother of the celebrated St. Augustin, herself of a mild and pacific disposition, had every thing to suffer from the violence of her husband. But with what a laudable discretion did she not manage to preserve peace; by opposing an unruffled meekness to the most outrageous bursts of passion? Did you but act in this manner, friends, we should soon see those dissensions, which at present are so usual, give way to domestic peace and the blessings of tranquillity.

For, dear people, in short; if charity reigns not among you, as it ought to do among men, who make a boast of being Christians, lay the blame
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on yourselves, and your want of indulgence to one another's failings. A little condescension would appease, or rather would prevent those misunderstandings and quarrels, that so frequently disgrace you. Instead of which, you feed them by the indiscretion of your behaviour. For instance, there is a person, you have a particular dislike to: you are conscious that, by exposing, you shall anger and provoke him: was charity your guide, so far from saying any thing that might possibly give him offence, would you not rather be studious to stifle all such sallies? Your husband is prone to passion; and experience informs you that, when he is in anger, he spares neither you, nor the majesty of his God: yet, notwithstanding this, you are so rash as to attack him. But he is a vile wretch, you urge, who spends the earnings of our common industry in rioting and drinking. It may be so. But can you think this plea sufficient to justify your conduct? He has already committed one fault; and must you be the occasion of his committing many more? Because he is to blame, must you be so too? Are we not permitted then to reprove such, as act unbecomingly? Undoubtedly you are; and in a former discourse I have shewn you in what manner to accomplish it.

it. It must be done however, as I there told you, with a discreet and wary prudence. Wait for a proper season therefore to represent your husband's fault to him. The loss of his money has made him fretful: the heat of the liquor has inflamed his blood: in a word, he is in no condition at present to listen to your remonstrances. Thus, dear Christians, if you wish effectually to secure your welfare, neglect nothing to preserve peace, first, with your God, and, secondly with every neighbour; and from this two-fold peace will spring a third, that will make your lives as happy, as our condition will admit of.

Reason itself tells us that, when we are at peace with God and man, nothing is wanting to complete our bliss, but to be at peace within ourselves. This is that peace of conscience, which puts the last seal to our mortal felicity. The person, who can truly say this watchful monitor does not reproach him, is as tranquil amidst the stir and busy tumult of the world, as the ark amidst the fears and awful terrours of the deluge. Now he, that is at peace with his Maker and fellow-creatures, must necessarily be at peace with the conviction of his conscience. And, according to St. Augustin, the reason of it is this; viz. that true peace

is nothing else but an obedience, regulated by faith, under the direction of God's law. When we are at peace with the Deity, our whole interior is a calm; our passions are subjected to our will; our will to reason; and our reason to the eternal dictates. This *peace*, which *surpasseth all understanding*, Phil. iv, 7. protects our feeble hearts; and, like the exterminating Angel, at the entrance of paradise, is ever at their gate, to keep off sin and its attendants.

Shew me, my friends, the man, who has cause to be fully satisfied with the testimony of his conscience; who, in the retrospect of his past years, discerns nothing grievous, that tarnishes their candour; who can affirm with veracity that he has uniformly trod in the footsteps of the virtuous; shew me, I say, this man, and I shall not hesitate to assert that he has not only within him the principle of peace, but true peace itself; and that there are no consolations to equal what he enjoys.

Nor imagine I exaggerate in this description of the soul, whose conscience makes it no reproaches; and which, in consequence thereof, possesses a true peace. No, I do not speak of a St. Paul only, who, defied all creatures to disturb his tranquillity. Neither do I speak solely of the martyrs,
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who, by a miracle of grace, experienced this peace sensibly in the midst of all their tortures. But I speak of every Christian, that is faithful to his God in the observances of virtue. Yes, dear people, such would be your own lot, were you careful to preserve your innocence, or, if lost, to recover it by a speedy conversion. Such are the great advantages of adhering to that law, which you have taken for your guide. And an inestimable law it is, my friends, of which we may say truly what Solomon said of wisdom; *all good things came to me together with her.* Wis. vii, 11.

How then does it happen, Christians, that so few of us experience this greatest of all blessings? Because, instead of being observant of the precepts of reason, we consult only our passions, which are subversive of all happiness; which prompt us to avoid what is good, and incline us strongly to every thing evil; which incite us to love what we should hate, and make us averse to what we should cherish. Hence, says St. James, the inquietudes, that torment us. *Whence contentions among you? Come they not from your concupiscences?* James, iv, 1. Instead of submitting our will to the will of our heavenly Father, we preposterously desire that he should accommodate his to ours. Instead of trying to please and content our great
 Creator,

Creator, we endeavour to please the world and gain it's good opinion. What more, in fine, shall I add? Instead of seeking the peace of Christ, which enlivens the heart with joy, we court that of the world only, which fills the mind with anxiety. Let us open our eyes to our folly then, and correct the mistake in time. And, if we are studious of our real welfare, let us omit nothing to acquire and maintain this triple peace; first, with our God: secondly, with our neighbour; and thirdly, with ourselves: ever keeping in mind that the latter branch of this peace can only be the consequence of a strict adhesion to the two former.

I dare to hope from that spirit of peace, which Christ gave to his Apostles, that there is not an individual among you, brethren, but who is either already in possession of this peace, or, at least, is ambitious and eager to obtain it. But beware of being deceived. The peace, which the Son of God holds forth to his disciples, is widely different from that, the world offers to it's votaries. No, my dear people, no; the world is not the place, in which this contentment is to be found. Be not therefore obitinate in seeking for it there. The Sovereign Being is both the authour and
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guardian of this blessing. Seek it in your God then, who alone is it's true centre. By looking for it in him, we shall be sure to find not only peace, but *the abundance of peace*; that invaluable peace, which, after having been our happiness on earth, will be our felicity in heaven; as I trust in the divine mercy we shall all of us experience. Amen.

T H E
TWENTY-FOURTH SUNDAY
After PENTECOST.

On Avoiding Sin.

WHEN YOU SHALL SEE THE ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION STANDING IN THE HOLY PLACE, THEN THEY, THAT ARE IN JUDEA, LET THEM FLY TO THE MOUNTAINS.

MATT. xxiv. 15, 16.

WE are not to think this lesson, my friends, regards only the Jews and the subversion of their temple. For the above menaces being accomplished, it must necessarily be superfluous, was it not applicable to Christians and the mystery of their salvation. Wherefore, to reap the designed advantage from it, we must not dwell on the words

words, but dive into the instruction our divine Redeemer meant to convey by it; viz. to avoid sin and practise virtue.

To be secure from the perils here mentioned therefore, three things are requisite. First, we must fly; *let them fly to the mountains*. Secondly, we must fly without delay; *let him, that is on the house-top, not come down to take any thing out of the house*. Lastly, we must not tarry; much less return to the danger; *let him, that is in the field, not go back to take his coat*.

From all this let us infer our obligation of shunning sin, and being diligent in the practice of virtue. *Turn from evil and do good*. Ps. 33. This point therefore settled, my first proposition is that you are bound to guard against vice at all times; but more especially at the seasons of penance, such as the approaching one of Advent: and my second shall shew the means to accomplish this happy purpose. This is the whole plan, dear people, of the subsequent discourse; to complete which to your welfare, unite your prayers with mine through the mediation of the Son of God.

Although the obligation of avoiding sin be universal, without exception of place or time, nevertheless it is true that we are bound to redouble our care on the days assigned to penance. And,

to this end, we must put in execution the advice of the prophet Isaias to *break asunder every burthen*: i. e. you, who have abandoned yourselves to intemperance, become sober. You, who have been addicted to swearing, correct yourselves. You who have injured your neighbour, either in his property or character, make him amends and repair your fault.

And, first, Christians, let us examine what intemperance is. It is an excess in the gratification of the sense of taste, by which, not content with what may satisfy nature, we indulge ourselves in eating and drinking beyond the limits of propriety. No vice therefore is more debasing than the one we are now speaking of: since it not only sets a man on a level with the brutes, but degrades him below them; and even carries him so far as, in the language of St. Paul, to make a God of his belly. What a sordid Divinity! Nevertheless, does not experience shew us many, who sacrifice to it not only the slender pittance they have for their support, but their faculties, their conscience, their salvation? Is this to behave like Christians? Is it to act like rational creatures?

Was reason our guide, it's light alone would satisfy us of the enormity of this vice, and discover it's baneful consequences. But to see the picture
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of the drunkard, take a view of it as drawn by the hand of the great St. Basil. He is a liar and a blasphemer; perverse and rash; ever ready to betray his friend, and perjure himself; violent to ferocity, and lascivious to abomination. In a word, says this Father, he is a man capable, at the time, of the most atrocious and horrid crimes. But not to go so far, if you think I exaggerate: we may at least affirm that a man, given to intemperance, is insensible to the calls of duty, and that callous to the concerns of salvation, he wilfully renounces and abjures his claim to heaven; for *drunkards*, says St. Paul, *shall not possess the kingdom of God.* 1 Cor. vi, 10.

Let this suffice to induce those, whose conscience here upbraids them, to an utter detestation of this worse than bestial vice. Let them copy their divine Saviour; of whom St. Augustin remarks that, during the course of this mortal life, he eat and drank like other people; and was even pleased to give his sanction to the wedding feast at Cana; to shew us that the only thing blamable on such occasions is excess. But there is another crime, still more general; and to which many of you, my friends, as well as others, I fear, are habitually enslaved; that of swearing, I mean, and cursing, which calls loudly for a reform.

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Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord, thy God, in vain. Exod. xx, 7. Who then are they, that transgress against this prohibition? Such, as use the name of God disrespectfully and unnecessarily: for *him the Lord will not hold guiltless*. Such, as swear as positively to the truth of what they are doubtful of, as if they had a full assurance of it's certainty. Such, as give occasion of sin to others by the oaths, they vent in their presence. Such, as make use of an oath, either to confirm a known falshood, or with an intention to deceive: for their habit of swearing gives birth to many prejuries. To which number we may add them, that neglect to prevent this sin in their children, their servants &c.; since, by not exerting that authority, which the law of God intrusts them with, they become accomplices in the crimes, they omit to give a check to. For, *if any one hear the voice of another swearing, if he do not utter it, he shall bear his iniquity.* Levit. v, 1.

Now, what are we to infer from these principles? That we must be ever upon our guard not to swear in vain; and that necessity alone can justify an oath at any time. For, observe, brethren; it is possible for circumstances to occur, in which it may not only be lawful to swear, but even conducive to the divine honour. In which
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light, St. Paul makes use of an oath, when he tells the Galatians; *as to the things, which I write to you, behold before God I lie not.* Gal. i, 20. But what are the conditions, under which we may be allowed to swear? *Thou shalt swear*, says the prophet Jeremy, *in truth, and in judgment, and in justice.* Jer. iv, 2. *Thou shalt swear in truth*: wherefore it cannot but be criminal to make use of an oath for the ratification of a falsity. *Thou shalt swear in judgment*: i. e. with discretion, and on mature deliberation. *Thou shalt swear in justice*: viz. so as to obtest nothing upon oath, that does not tend either to the glory of God, or to the welfare of our neighbour.

Nevertheless, dear people, how many are there among you, who not only swear rashly and without any cause; but even with curses and the most horrid imprecations? The former, from habit, can scarce utter a sentence, without confirming it with an oath; as if they were afraid of being suspected of lying. But let them remember that, if their character for veracity be otherwise unimpeached, they require no oaths to support their assertions: and that no swearing will avail, if this good opinion be lost. The latter vow passionately to revenge their injured honour; in this regard similar to those profligate Jews, who bound them-

selves mutually to pursue St. Paul to death ; in whose blood it would have been better for them had they never dipped their hands.

Happy still, Christians, did the mischief end here. But alas ! whither does this liberty, which you indulge without remorse, conduct you by degrees ? Oh such of you, my friends, as still bear respect to the sacred name of God ! Shudder at the word *blasphemy*, which I am here necessitated to pronounce. What ! do you dare to vilify your Maker and utter things injurious to the majesty of his grandeur ? Do you know how the Lord himself commands the blasphemer to be treated ? *Bring him, he says, without the camp, and let all the people stone him.* Was the Deity to require the like satisfaction now a days, how many would be the victims of this outrageous offence ? But, if the voice of God be silent, let the statutes of man speak : let the tongue of profanation be bored, as they ordain, and a stop put to such language, as disgraces humanity no less than religion.

A third obligation, brethren, is to make good to your neighbour whatever injury you may have done him, either in his character or property. How general the former crime is I have already explained on the subject of detraction ; and as for the latter, there is, perhaps, no sin more common,
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among the lower orders, than this of thieving, especially in the country. No indeed; we need not go on the road to feel the hand of depredation: we may too frequently at home bear witness to it's rapacity. Know therefore, Christians, that, when you rob your neighbour's premises, when you take away his wood, his fruit, or any thing else belonging to him, you are strictly guilty of theft, and are obliged to restitution. This is a point, however, that few, I fear, reflect upon; for which reason I think it my business to remind them of their duty, and warn them of the risk they run.

For, says St. Fulgentius, if they are to be damned, who refuse to assist the needy, when they have it in their power, what doom severe enough for them, who appropriate to their own use the effects of other people? Let such then among you, friends, as are conscious of this guilt, tremble for their fate. The indignation of heaven is ready to burst over them: nor have they any means to evade it, but a speedy restitution of their ill-acquired goods.

For be assured that your thefts, and the same I say of your slanders, will never be forgiven without an adequate satisfaction. This obligation may seem hard, but it is equitable and necessary, being founded on the law of God, and the general interest of mankind. What is it you are doing then,

when you omit to comply with it? You are arming the divine vengeance ; you are sealing your reprobation. For learn it now, and never more forget it ; you may fast, you may shed floods of tears, you may have recourse to the most rigid and mortifying austerities ; still all will be in vain, if restitution be neglected. So says St. Augustin, who roundly asserts that repentance is a mockery, if not accompanied with reparation. But from the obligation of avoiding evil, let us proceed to consider the good, we are next required to do.

There are three things that cannot be dispensed with at any time ; much less at such seasons as is that now at hand. Of these the first is to enter, according to the spirit of the Church, into the sentiments of compunction. The second, to frequent more assiduously the tribunal of reconciliation. And the third, to be more diligent in learning the word of God.

In the first place then, I say that there are times, in which you ought to be more particular in your endeavours to assume a penitential spirit. And this obligation is so essential and indispensable, that no excuse whatever can annul or invalidate it.

But in what does this spirit consist, you say ? Learn it from the prophet Joel : *Be converted with all your heart : rend your hearts, and not your garments.*

ments. Joel ii. 13. And St. Paul informs us that *there is a sorrow according to God, which worketh penance unto salvation*; the very soul of which consists in the three following heads, in being sensible of the weight of sin, in bewailing sin, and in punishing sin: three points, that escaped neither the attention nor the practice of the penitent David. He feels his sin; *my iniquities, as a burthen, are become heavy upon me.* Pf. xxxv. And how great was his sorrow for his sin! I have laboured with groaning: *every night I will wash my bed; I will water my couch with my tears.* Pf. vi. Nor does it satisfy him to feel, and regret his sin. He consents to bear it's punishment; strike, O Lord! and revenge thyself; I am prepared to suffer, and *am ready for scourges.* Pf. xxxvii.

Which of you, dear people, can confidently say that he is sensible of his sin, that he laments his sin, that he punishes his sin? But, if you are willing to adopt these sentiments, make use of the following means. First; shun every occasion of sin: avoid that drinking-house, which has hitherto been your bane. Secondly, turn all your actions and sufferings to the best account. Make a sacrifice of them to God; and, while you are bending under the weight of your labour, raise your hearts to the Deity, and say to him; Yes, my God! I am a sinner,

sinner, and therefore it is but equitable I should bear the load, which thy justice lays upon me. Lastly, unite, as much as possible, the sorrow of contrition with the remembrance of your iniquities; saying with the publican; sinner as I am, be propitious to me, O God!

Moreover, the spirit of the Church requires you, on these occasions, to present yourselves often at the seat of forgiveness. There is no precept, I own, either of Christ or his spouse, that specifies the time, in which this duty is incumbent. Because neither Christ nor his Church could suppose a precise period when men, endowed with free will, should infallibly be involved in a state of mortal sin. Neither am I ignorant that the Council of Lateran obliges us to confess our sins but once in a year. However, by that expression *at least once in a year*, it plainly insinuates it's intention to be that we should have recourse to this sacrament much oftener during that space.

Did time permit it, brethren, I have here an opportunity of shewing the many advantages resulting from confession. And to touch upon them lightly, I appeal to your own feelings. Have you not frequently experienced that the sense of this obligation being at hand has retained you in due bounds? And, in fact, when you reflect that you must
shortly

shortly render an account of your conscience to God's minister, are you not disposed to be more careful? Has not the anticipated view of that awful tribunal a secret virtue, which influences the whole system of your conduct? At the appearance of vice, an inward monitor exhorts you to check it's progress, and avoid the danger. How much would the occasions of your sins be diminished then, were you diligent in this practice? And, on the other hand, what an increase of good works! Your last confession was witness to many pious resolutions; which, if strictly followed up, would long since have fixed your unsteadiness. Hence let us infer that the seasons marked for this purpose by the discipline of the Church, are highly beneficial; that, applying them to her intentions, we may divest ourselves of the old man, and put on the new; and, thus arrayed, be introduced to the solemn banquet of the Christian institute.

Finally, my friends, not to detain you any longer, I conclude by asserting that, if you would act in correspondence with the views of the Church, you must also be more assiduous in studying the will of God, from the dictates of his word. This his spouse distributes with profusion at these seasons. Enter into her spirit therefore: read it with attention, and take every opportunity of hearing

it.

it explained. Redouble your ardour; *for the time is short*. Make the most of it you can; and have a care lest you be stopped, and the curtain dropped upon you, before your part be completed, and your conversion accomplished.

Renew your protestations then to avoid all sin in future, and especially, dear people, those, to which you know yourselves habituated. Let your prayers be both frequent and fervent. Be converted in your hearts. Forget your bodies as much as possible, to think only of your souls, and strive daily to advance in the practice of every virtue; that being victorious over your passions, and laden with good works, you may be duly prepared for a blissful immortality. Amen.



The End of the Second Volume.

E R R A T A of Vol. II.

PAGE. LINE.

15	5	Instead of <i>my secundo</i> , read <i>per</i> .
Ibid.	7	Instead of <i>plentitude</i> , read <i>plenitude</i> .
40	3	Instead of <i>in</i> , read <i>on</i> .
45	12	After <i>that</i> , add <i>of</i> .
75	23	After <i>in</i> , add <i>the</i> .
103	15	Instead of <i>it is</i> , read <i>is it</i> .
105	11	Instead of <i>spoke</i> , read <i>spoken</i> .
181	19	After <i>as</i> , add <i>they</i> .
184	23	Instead of <i>persist</i> , read <i>persist</i> .
185	26	Dele <i>only</i> primo.
216	22	After <i>insensible</i> , dele <i>to</i> .
228	4	After <i>avidity</i> , add <i>and</i> .
Ibid.	19	After <i>and</i> , add <i>the</i> .
229	11	Instead of <i>applicalion</i> , read <i>application</i> .
231	2	After <i>hereafter</i> , add <i>the</i> .
250	17	After <i>we</i> , dele <i>had</i> .
280	15	Instead of <i>it it</i> , read <i>it is</i> .
Ibid.	19	Instead of <i>Is is</i> , read <i>Is it</i> .
293	14	After <i>assures</i> , add <i>you</i> .
381	8	Instead of <i>I exaggerate</i> , read <i>this exaggerated</i> .
382	12	Instead of <i>prejuries</i> , read <i>perjuries</i> .



